



CORONERS COURT OF QUEENSLAND

FINDINGS OF INVESTIGATION

CITATION: **Non-inquest findings into the death of Rinabel Tiglao Blackmore**

TITLE OF COURT: Coroners Court

JURISDICTION: Cairns

DATE: 4 April 2019

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FINDINGS OF: Nerida Wilson, Northern Coroner

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Introduction

1. Rinabel Tiglao Blackmore sustained fatal injuries when she exited a moving vehicle driven by Shane Dickson at around midnight, 31 December 2014. The vehicle was travelling at approximately 100 kilometres per hour when Ms Blackmore exited.
2. Ms Blackmore and Mr Dickson were in an intimate relationship. They were in the process of separating.
3. Ms Blackmore exited the vehicle whilst being verbally abused and threatened by Mr Dickson in the context of a protracted episode of domestic violence over a 48 hour period.
4. Ms Blackmore died on 2 January 2015 at the Townsville Hospital when her life support was withdrawn. She was 44 years of age.
5. In the preparation of these findings I have had regard to the following:
 - a) A Brief of Evidence prepared by the Queensland Police Service (QPS);
 - b) Sentencing remarks (Supreme Court Queensland) after Mr Dickson's plea of guilty to Manslaughter at Rockhampton on 24 November 2016;
 - c) Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) records;
 - d) A Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Unit (DFVDRU) report dated 11 December 2017; and
 - e) The QPS Response to Coroner dated 1 November 2018.

Background

6. Throughout these findings I refer to a sequence of events that describe the behaviour, conduct, interactions and conversations between Mr Dickson and Ms Blackmore. Significant aspects of the narrative are drawn entirely from Mr Dickson's version of events, as told to police in interviews or provided in sentencing submissions.
7. The extent (or truth) of what occurred in the vehicle that night, and the days immediately prior, will never be known. Ms Blackmore's version of events are unavailable.
8. I am assisted by the academic research analysing the weight given to an accused's version of events in the absence of any other witness (see for example: Jenny Morgan, *Provocation Law and Facts: Dead Women Tell No Tale, Tales Are Told about Them*, 21 Melb. U.L. Rev. 237 (1997)).
9. The veracity of Mr Dickson's version of events, being the only version available, was not subject to contest. He ultimately entered a plea of guilty to one charge of manslaughter. There are no independent witnesses to the events in the vehicle.
10. Ms Blackmore migrated to Australia from the Philippines in 1991 and English was not her first language.
11. In Australia, Ms Blackmore found employment in a food factory but later commenced her own cleaning business.
12. At the time of her death, Ms Blackmore was a married woman, and a mother to three sons; the two eldest were adults and the youngest in his later school years. Ms

Blackmore and her husband separated in 2014. Her friends and family characterised her marriage as one that involved domestic violence (although there are no formal records supporting these claims).

13. When Ms Blackmore separated from her husband she informed friends and family that she was moving to Perth for work. Ms Blackmore moved from Brisbane and from time to time would travel back to visit her children and other family members who continued to live there. Ms Blackmore last saw her family over the Christmas period of 2014. During that visit she appeared happy.
14. Ms Blackmore in fact did not move to Perth. Instead, she moved to Middlemount in Central Queensland, about 196km north-west of Rockhampton. Ms Blackmore did not tell family and friends of her decision and for a period of time maintained that she was in Perth when she spoke with them; save for one friend in whom she confided. By then Ms Blackmore had commenced a relationship with Mr Dickson.
15. Ms Blackmore obtained employment as a cleaner in Middlemount.
16. By mid-December 2014 at least one family member (her youngest son) was aware that she was living in Middlemount.
17. Why Ms Blackmore maintained the dissimulation of living in Perth was not immediately apparent. A partial explanation may be due to her having commenced a relationship with Mr Dickson. That relationship commenced prior to the separation from her husband.
18. Ms Blackmore had previously told a friend that her husband was violent. This, and other considerations, may also have provided motivation to keep her true whereabouts concealed.

Ms Blackmore meets Mr Dickson

19. Ms Blackmore and Mr Dickson met online; he worked at a coal mine in Middlemount.
20. When her youngest son came to visit in November 2014, she asked Mr Dickson to move out of their shared residence in Middlemount. Ms Blackmore perceived that her family would not approve of her living with a male to whom she was not married.
21. Ms Blackmore's reluctance to tell her family about the new relationship was a source of consternation for Mr Dickson and was allegedly the trigger for two separate (although causally connected) episodes of domestic violence in the 48 hours prior to her death.
22. Ms Blackmore and Mr Dickson planned to move from Middlemount and return to Brisbane together. Mr Dickson later changed his mind, then did not want Ms Blackmore to relocate (without him). Ms Blackmore, without Mr Dickson's knowledge rented an apartment in Brisbane for two of her sons (and possibly herself).
23. Ms Blackmore spent the 2014 Christmas period in Brisbane whilst Mr Dickson visited friends in Bundaberg. During their time apart, Mr Dickson exhibited controlling and jealous behaviours. He demanded that Ms Blackmore take photos of the people she was with so that he could satisfy himself that she wasn't cheating on him.

24. Mr Dickson sent messages to Ms Blackmore's male friends from her mobile phone, impersonating her, and asking when they were free to have sex again, in an attempt to 'catch her out' for alleged infidelity.

The first and only report of domestic violence made by Ms Blackmore to police (approximately 40 hours prior to her death) including that she was 'grabbed and choked'

25. On 28 December 2014, Ms Blackmore travelled from Brisbane to Bundaberg to meet and stay overnight with Mr Dickson at a local motel. In his interview with police on 31 December 2014, Mr Dickson stated that on the morning of 29 December 2014 an argument ensued in their motel room when he asked Ms Blackmore why he was her "*dirty little secret*".¹ That term was used as a reference to Ms Blackmore not informing her family of her intimate relationship with Mr Dickson. He further stated that their argument then got "*pushy*".
26. When asked to describe his actions towards Ms Blackmore he stated he "*pushed her*" and "*grabbed her*".² He described his grabbing action as putting his hands on her shoulders.³ Mr Dickson then described going to the front office of the motel with Ms Blackmore after that argument.
27. I am reliant on Mr Dickson's interview with police to understand some aspects of events in the motel room, and I have the benefit of a statement from the female manager of the motel who directly observed some subsequent events in the front office and outside. I also viewed the relevant CCTV footage taken in the motel reception area.
28. The female manager attended the front office when she heard a buzzer sound. When she arrived she observed Mr Dickson and Ms Blackmore engaged in a "*tug of war*" over a handbag.
29. She heard Ms Blackmore saying "*I want to break up babe*". She heard Mr Dickson reply: "*We can talk about it. This lady doesn't have to hear everything. Let's talk about it in the car. Let's just stay another night so we can talk about it*".
30. The female manager considered Ms Blackmore "*was not aggressive*" however Mr Dickson's behaviour "*was a little raised and more aggressive than [Ms Blackmore's]*".
31. The female manager then observed the 'tug of war' end after which Ms Blackmore "*jumped up onto two chairs that are located to the left of the office counter. She then jumped straight onto the counter and onto the floor behind it standing beside me*". The female manager heard Mr Dickson continue to ask Ms Blackmore to stay another night to which Ms Blackmore consistently refused.
32. Ms Blackmore then went and stood close to the female manager and whispered: "*can you call the police, call the police*".
33. The female manager observed Mr Dickson was becoming more agitated and attempted to convince Ms Blackmore to get into the car with him.

¹ T1.76/7-40

² T1.79/1-9

³ T1.79/13

34. The female manager then observed Mr Dickson go and sit in his car that was parked adjacent to the front office and in full view.
35. In his interview with police Mr Dickson agreed an argument had occurred in the motel office however he was not questioned on the details of that argument. It is unclear whether interviewing police had the benefit of the female Manager's statement at the time of the interview, noting that the statement was taken on the same day.
36. The female manager observed Ms Blackmore was "*satisfied*" to remain in the front office of the motel whilst Mr Dickson was in his car outside. During that time Ms Blackmore made some disclosures about an earlier incident telling the female manager:
- "Shane ... put his hands around my neck and pushed the back of my neck with his finger. I'm frightened for my life and [do] not want to be with him any longer".*
37. Ms Blackmore also disclosed she wanted to break up with Mr Dickson and:
- "I'm frightened that if you don't get the police, he will kill me"*
38. The female manager then observed Mr Dickson drive off for a short period of time before returning. When he returned Ms Blackmore stepped out of the office. The female manager observed Mr Dickson speaking on a white phone, she then heard Ms Blackmore say: "*oh no, he's ringing my Mum ... my mum doesn't even know I have a boyfriend*". The female manager then observed Ms Blackmore lean into the car and try to take the phone from Mr Dickson. Ms Blackmore instead grabbed a phone in a red case.
39. It appears on the material that is available to me that the white phone that was in Mr Dickson's possession was in fact Ms Blackmore's phone. Likewise the phone in the red case belonged to Mr Dickson.
40. It was at this time that the female manager informed Mr Dickson and Ms Blackmore that she was calling the police. I have had the benefit of listening to this call. During that call the female manager spoke with the operator and provided initial details of the incident and the address; she then handed the phone over to Ms Blackmore. Having regard to that conversation it is apparent the female manager had serious concerns about Mr Dickson's behaviour and held real concerns for Ms Blackmore's life. This was clearly articulated to the operator.
41. Ms Blackmore communicated to the operator the concerns she held for her life and safety and her desire to recover personal effects from Mr Dickson's vehicle.
42. At 9:40am that morning two constables from the Bundaberg Police Station were tasked to attend the motel. When they arrived they spoke with Ms Blackmore. Having regard to the statement of one of these attending officers it appears they became aware that the manager was a witness to some of the events. This would also have been apparent from the call initiated by the manager to police.
43. Those two officers took a version of events from Ms Blackmore. One of the officers recalled that version in the following terms:
- "Shane and I have been in a relationship for about eight months, there has been violence in the past and it started when the relationship started. Last night we had a fight and he was telling me that I was a liar and that he didn't trust me anymore. He*

keeps asking me to introduce him to my family but how can I introduce him to my family when I have to explain the bruises? He has punched me in the past. Last night's argument he put his hands around my neck when he kept repeating that I was a liar and he didn't trust me".

44. The second officer recalled it as follows:

"Last night, he grabbed me and choked me using one hand. We had a fight. He was telling me I was a liar and that he didn't trust me. It's been like this since we got together and I can't introduce him to any of my friends because of how he is. He's punched me in the past. He said to me he doesn't care if he kills me, because jail is easier than being with me".

45. I do not consider it necessary to resolve the differences in those versions; allowing for the possibility the actual conversation may have comprised elements from both. The more important consideration, on either account, is that Ms Blackmore made allegations of serious violence being used against her by Mr Dickson. Those allegations related not just to the previous 24 hour period but to the entirety of their relationship.

46. Following this conversation one of the two attending officers requested another crew to commence a patrol for Mr Dickson's vehicle. During this time the two attending officers observed Ms Blackmore receive and make calls using the phone handset she had taken from Mr Dickson earlier. It appears Mr Dickson was the other party to those calls. It does not appear any attempts were made by either officer to intervene in those calls.

47. During this time Mr Dickson's car was observed to pull up outside the front of the motel then drive off. The inference being that he had observed police.

48. Sometime after this, the two attending officers received notification from a third police constable that he had intercepted Mr Dickson on Hampson Street in Bundaberg and detained him. The two attending officers then left the motel and joined the third officer in speaking with Mr Dickson.

49. It does not appear that either of those officers spoke to the female manager prior to leaving, notwithstanding she had initiated the phone call to police requesting assistance.

50. Police conversations with Mr Dickson were recorded on body worn camera by one of the three officers. I have had the benefit of reviewing that footage. Having regard to it and the three statements of the police officers involved it does not appear that Mr Dickson was given any warnings or cautions with regard to his legal rights. In that regard I am mindful of what observations I make of this incident.

51. The following comments can nonetheless be made:

- a) Mr Dickson did not appear concerned by the presence of three police officers;
- b) Police did not take the opportunity to fully put Ms Blackmore's version of events to Mr Dickson or fully test his responses; and
- c) Police did not actively manage Mr Dickson's behaviour as demonstrated by allowing him to speak with Ms Blackmore via telephone; notwithstanding two of the attending officers having been in her company so shortly beforehand, during which she made allegations of serious violence against her by Mr Dickson.

52. Mr Dickson was eventually un-detained; whilst he was not charged with any offence, police did inform him they would be applying for a protection order. Mr Dickson informed police that he would not see Ms Blackmore again and that he would be returning to Middlemount. Mr Dickson appeared indifferent to the making of the protection order.
53. Police then returned to the motel with Mr Dickson and supervised the return of personal effects to Ms Blackmore and the exchange of their respective mobile phones. At this time the female manager was still present and had been joined by her husband.
54. Following the return of effects and exchange of phones, Mr Dickson left the motel. In a subsequent conversation, Ms Blackmore informed one of the three attending police officers she was going to catch a train back to Rockhampton and have a friend meet her there.
55. The only action taken by police after these events was to prepare an application for a protection order.
56. Not long after police had left the motel a male and a female person arrived and identified themselves as 'friends' of Ms Blackmore.
57. The female manager was still with Ms Blackmore at that time and heard her say: "*they are my friends but they are his (Mr Dickson's) friends too*". Approximately five minutes later Mr Dickson returned to the motel, contrary to what he told police earlier. The reappearance of Mr Dickson came as a 'shock' to the female manager and she told him "*you shouldn't even be here*".
58. A conversation took place between Mr Dickson, Ms Blackmore, and the two friends that had arrived. It does not appear the female manager was a party to any of those conversations, however when they left shortly after, Ms Blackmore told the female manager that Mr Dickson had taken \$400 from her bag.
59. These events clearly triggered a concern in the minds of the female manager and her husband for Ms Blackmore's safety such that they made the decision to move Ms Blackmore and her belongings into their private residence. From there Ms Blackmore made arrangements to be collected by a friend. Rather than be collected from the motel, Ms Blackmore instead arranged to be collected by her friend from the Sugarland Shopping Centre.
60. The female manager assisted Ms Blackmore with transport to the shopping centre. She did not see her again after that.

The Police Application for a Protection Order

61. I have had regard to the Application for a Protection Order prepared by the police. The grounds for the protection order as stated as follows (extracted in full):

"The aggrieved and the respondent were staying at a motel in Bundaberg. Police attended the motel at about 9.45am (29 December 2014) and spoke with the aggrieved and later the respondent. The aggrieved stated that herself and the respondent have been in a relationship for about 8 months. The aggrieved stated to police that during the night of 28th December 2014 the respondent grabbed her

with one hand around the throat and tried to choke her. She further stated that they fought and the respondent accused her of lying and telling her that he didn't trust her.

She further stated that he's been abusing her since the relationship started, has been punching her and that he didn't care if he killed her because jail is easier.

The respondent was not at the hotel when police attended, the aggrieved called the respondent and he pulled up outside the hotel but when he saw police drove off again. Another crew intercepted the vehicle down the road and the police took up with the respondent. He stated that he and the aggrieved had had a verbal argument the night before and were now split up and that nothing further had happened. The respondent and aggrieved exchanged property and have separate addresses outside of Bundaberg. The aggrieved is fearful of the respondent and is worried about him going to her mother's address.

It is necessary and desirable to protect the aggrieved due to the respondent's violent nature and history and the aggrieved's level of fear towards the respondent."

62. It is apparent from the content of the application the officers were aware of Mr Dickson's prior history of domestic and family violence. In the application for a protection order, the responding officers identified that it was "*necessary and desirable to protect the aggrieved due to **the respondent's violent nature and history** (emphasis added) and the aggrieved's level of fear towards the respondent*".
63. Notwithstanding Mr Dickson's known history and the information provided by Ms Blackmore, that he had threatened to kill her, and had the previous evening "*grabbed her with one hand around the throat and tried to choke her*", and had been abusing her for eight months, the police did not take Mr Dickson into custody or charge him with a criminal offence.
64. The attending police did not take a statement (or a version) from the female Manager who had witnessed the interaction in the front office of the Motel that morning; notwithstanding she clearly identified herself in the call to police. The first record of the female manager's version of events was taken in a formal statement on 31 December 2014 in anticipation of criminal proceedings, after Ms Blackmore had exited the vehicle, and before her life support was withdrawn.
65. In the course of providing her statement, the female manager alerted police to the availability of CCTV footage from the front office of the motel and provided it to police. Had a statement (or a version) been taken from the female manager at the time of the incident, its existence would have become apparent.
66. Having had the benefit of viewing this CCTV footage, I am satisfied that if police had viewed the footage at the time of the incident they would have better understood the dynamics of the relationship and responded accordingly.
67. Further, there is no reference to the police referring Ms Blackmore to a refuge or women's shelter or providing the contact details for an appropriate service such as 'DV Connect' hotline for advice and assistance.
68. I have formed a view that the attending police missed opportunities to adequately assess the risk to Ms Blackmore and gather evidence that could have formed the basis for a charge or charges against Mr Dickson in relation to that incident.

69. I acknowledge that four years have lapsed since Ms Blackmore's death and that in general terms police training and awareness in relation to domestic violence and the significance of non-fatal strangulation has improved significantly. I refer to the QPS response to these findings below.

Ms Blackmore returns to Middlemount

70. At about 11:00am Ms Blackmore called a male friend who resided in a unit on Atkinson St, Middlemount. That call went unanswered.
71. At approximately 12:40pm Ms Blackmore phoned a female friend in Brisbane and told her she had broken up with Mr Dickson and did not have any money; she asked the female friend to drive to Bundaberg and pick her up. The female friend then drove from Brisbane to Bundaberg (a distance of 360 km).
72. At about 3:30pm Ms Blackmore's male friend called her back and they had a conversation. The male friend recalled Ms Blackmore telling him: "*[Mr Dickson] was jealous ... [he] had choked her around the throat*". She also told her male friend she was of the belief that Mr Dickson was going to kill her and that she wanted to separate from him.
73. During their conversation Ms Blackmore told her male friend that she was worried about her son's passport that was in a bag that belonged to her; that bag was still at Mr Dickson's unit on McKenzie St, Middlemount. She asked him to go to the unit, use a spare key to gain entry and retrieve the bag and passport for her.
74. Mr Blackmore's male friend attended the unit at about 5:00pm. He was unable to gain access to the unit and retrieve the items. He then made a call to her during which she discussed another means by which he might get the spare key but he declined to assist any further.
75. Ms Blackmore's female friend arrived in Bundaberg at about 6:00pm. She picked up Ms Blackmore from an agreed location. After picking up Ms Blackmore they drove back to the motel to collect Ms Blackmore's belongings. Whilst they were at the motel Ms Blackmore made disclosures to her female friend about what occurred.
76. Ms Blackmore said there had been an argument with Mr Dickson who acted in a jealous manner and accused her of sleeping with other men. She also said that Mr Dickson had called her a 'slut' and choked her with his hands.
77. At Ms Blackmore's request her female friend drove them from the motel to Middlemount (an additional 555 km) so that Ms Blackmore could collect the remainder of her property, including passports, from Mr Dickson's unit. During the drive, Ms Blackmore received "a lot" of SMS messages which she told her female friend were coming from Mr Dickson. Ms Blackmore responded to some of the messages. It is unclear from the material what the content of those messages were.
78. Ms Blackmore and her friend arrived at Middlemount at about 1:00am on 30 December 2014. They stayed at the Atkinson St unit of Ms Blackmore's male friend, whom she had earlier asked to gain access to Mr Dickson's unit to recover the passport and bag.
79. Later in the morning of 30 December 2014, Ms Blackmore was observed engaging in a number of phone calls with Mr Dickson. Following those calls the female friend

recalled the following conversation she had with Ms Blackmore: “*Shane told her that it was his place and she had no right going into his place to collect her property*” and “*his friend lives next door and he (Mr Dickson) will know if she tries and gets into the place*”.

80. It is apparent those preceding phone calls related, at least in part, to Ms Blackmore attempting to recover her personal effects. I regard this as demonstrative of her intention to follow through on the separation.
81. Ms Blackmore told her female friend she felt like “*she had to go and try sort stuff out with Shane so she could get her stuff*”. The female friend discouraged her from doing that and suggested she contact police so they could be present when she went to recover her personal effects. Ms Blackmore sought to reassure her female friend that she would be okay.
82. Ms Blackmore’s male friend was not present at the time as he had gone to work.
83. Ms Blackmore and her female friend then went to Mr Dickson’s unit where Ms Blackmore waited. Ms Blackmore came to an arrangement with her female friend to call and inform her about her safety; if during that call Ms Blackmore said everything was okay it meant her female friend could leave Middlemount. However, if Ms Blackmore said: “*you should come and have a look at the unit*” it meant that she was in trouble and her female friend should call the police. The female friend then went back to the Atkinson St unit and waited.
84. Shortly after 1:00pm Ms Blackmore’s male friend missed a call from her. Then at 1:10pm he received a message from her stating: “*don’t text or call don’t text me back now*”.
85. At 6:00pm Ms Blackmore called her female friend and said everything was okay and that she could leave. The female friend left Middlemount at about 6:30pm and commenced driving to Gladstone.

Mr Dickson’s version of his violent conduct towards Ms Blackmore

86. The following sequence of events is substantially drawn from Mr Dickson’s electronically recorded interview with police.
87. In his interview Mr Dickson told police that he arrived back at the Middlemount unit at lunch time on 30 December 2014. When he arrived Ms Blackmore was sitting out the front.⁴ He observed Ms Blackmore had personal effects with her. Mr Dickson informed police he indicated for her to go inside. He says she didn’t take anything (her personal effects) inside. “*and that’s when we were kissing and carrying on , done the deed, went back outside, grabbed her stuff, bought it back inside and done the deed again. Been playing around for a while*”.⁵ When asked what ‘done the deed’ referred to, Mr Dickson said “*having sex*”. He clarified further in the interview “*I’ve met her, gave her a hug. She’s given me a hug and next minute we’re kissing and carrying on within minutes*”.⁶

⁴ T1.20/45-53

⁵ T1 21/40-50

⁶ T1.22/24-25

88. Ms Blackmore then went outside, retrieved her possessions and came back inside the unit. Mr Dickson said they again had sex, before falling asleep together on the bed. When they awoke they started arguing.⁷ The argument was about issues of infidelity and her still being (legally) married.
89. Mr Dickson admitted in his interview that he became physically violent during this argument. He admitted he grabbed her around the “collar bone” or “shoulder”, “shaking her” and “squeezing her”.⁸ He also admitted to pushing her to the ground.⁹ He described Ms Blackmore as screaming at him, telling him “stop it” and “I love you”.¹⁰ He stated they physically separated from each other; Ms Blackmore went to the shower; he went to the lounge room.¹¹
90. He admitted to police that as a consequence of that assault she had marks on her shoulders and “around the neck”.¹² He described them as red coloured.¹³
91. Later in the night, following that period of separation, they began arguing again. During this second argument Mr Dickson “grabbed” her a second time. He told police: “I grabbed her by the – the collar. Or the collar of like her shirt”.¹⁴ He demonstrated to police a physical action whereby he made contact with her lip causing it to bleed.¹⁵ He described it as “almost a punching motion”.¹⁶ Some of Ms Blackmore’s blood came to be on the floor of the unit, Mr Dickson described it as “just a bit of blood”, “like drips on the floor”.¹⁷
92. Mr Dickson also told police that during this second argument he was shaking Ms Blackmore. When asked to describe how he did that he replied: “around the neck ... and on the collarbone and the shoulders”.¹⁸ He then described pushing her to the couch but when queried by police described ‘sitting’ on the couch at which time the second argument “sort of stopped”.¹⁹ He then described Ms Blackmore retrieving a towel and they both wiped her blood from the floor.²⁰
93. After cleaning up her blood they both went back into the lounge room; Mr Dickson told police there were “still fighting” at that time and made admission to using additional violence against Ms Blackmore.²¹ He told police that he had “shaken her”, “grabbed her around the neck” and “pushed her [back] on to the couch”.²² He described using a degree of “force” when holding her by the neck.²³
94. The interviewing officer asked “Did she stop like breathing like or trying to – cough or anything like that” to which Mr Dickson responded “she didn’t actually stop breathing

⁷ T1.21/43-49

⁸ T1.26/30-54

⁹ T1.29/21-51

¹⁰ T1.27/13-15

¹¹ T1.27/44-53

¹² T1.30/25-36

¹³ T1.31/15-29

¹⁴ T1.32/1-2

¹⁵ T1.32/11-16

¹⁶ T1.34/13-14

¹⁷ T1.34/32-43

¹⁸ T1.35/44-48

¹⁹ T1.35-36/50-2

²⁰ T1.36-37

²¹ T1.38/10-22

²² T1 38/30-60

²³ T1.38/39-53

*or nothing ... she just – she grabbed me by the – then hands then ... she’s gone ‘Ah –huh stop it’.*²⁴ I understand this to mean that Ms Blackmore was attempting to remove Mr Dickson’s hands from her neck.

95. When asked how this incident ended Mr Dickson told police: *“it sort of just all blew, like just come – it just calms down”.*²⁵ He described how they stopped saying anything to each other and that Ms Blackmore was crying: *“like she’s crying ... she’d be going ‘I love you, I don’t want to leave you”.* Mr Dickson was unable to reconcile his own (freely admitted) violence against Ms Blackmore with her apparent response, telling police: *“how does this work? Like it – I’ve just shaken the shit out of you, and what’s going on here? What’s – it’s, ‘I love you”.*²⁶
96. He states after this argument ended they both lay back on the bed however he could not sleep. Mr Dickson said to Ms Blackmore *“This is bullshit, what are we doing here, this is not gonna work, we’re meant to be driving today so let’s go, no traffic, no-one’s there, let’s do it”.*²⁷ He then said *“she grabbed a bag, grabbed a jumper, grabbed a pair of shoes, grabbed her shit, her toiletry bag”.*²⁸
97. Independently of Mr Dickson’s interview, Ms Blackmore’s mobile phone records reveal that at 10:29pm, a phone call was made from her phone to a former male work colleague. Her work colleague missed the call. Then at 10:32pm, her work colleague received a text message through an internet application called ‘Line’. The message stated: *“Hi how are you been a while since we last fucked when you free again”.*
98. Ms Blackmore’s former work colleague thought that this was strange as he had never received anything like that before from Ms Blackmore and they had never been in an intimate relationship. Hours later, he sent a message to Ms Blackmore’s phone asking where she was and he tried calling her but there was no response.
99. I am satisfied, having regard to previous examples of such behaviour, that Mr Dickson was the author of that message, not Ms Blackmore.
100. Shortly after that message was sent, at 10:50pm, Ms Blackmore’s female friend received a call. The caller details indicated it originated from Ms Blackmore’s mobile phone, however when the female friend answered the call she heard a male voice ask her: *“where are you now”?* The female friend also heard Ms Blackmore’s voice in the background saying: *“you should really see the unit, you should really, really see the unit. Maybe next time”.*
101. The female friend understood this to be the code they had discussed earlier. The female friend believed that Ms Blackmore was in danger.
102. At 11:03pm the female friend sent a message to Ms Blackmore asking whether she wanted her to contact police on her behalf. That message was sent in a Filipino dialect which she and Ms Blackmore had previously communicated with. Almost immediately afterward the female friend received a response saying: *“English please ... All good thank you. Thanks for bringing me today. We travelling again tomorrow back to Brisbane maybe we can catch up there if that where you going now”.*

²⁴ T1 39/1-25

²⁵ T1.39/42-43

²⁶ T1 40/1-10

²⁷ T1.40-41/40-7

²⁸ T1.41/23-24

103. As a result of that response the female friend formed the belief Ms Blackmore no longer had possession or control of her mobile phone. She then stopped driving, pulled into a service station and sent an SMS message to Ms Blackmore's male friend back in Middlemount. She asked him to call police to assist Ms Blackmore (this message was not received by him).

Ms Blackmore exits the moving vehicle and sustains non-survivable injuries

104. In his interview with police Mr Dickson stated that after deciding drive to Brisbane they then placed Ms Blackmore's luggage into his vehicle. Ms Blackmore initially sat in the rear of the vehicle as it appeared she was looking for an item in one of her bags.²⁹ Mr Dickson then commenced driving. He drove directly out of Middlemount towards the Fitzroy Development Road.
105. A forensic examination of Mr Dickson's vehicle later revealed that the child lock was engaged on the door where Ms Blackmore was seated behind the driver. The other rear door was blocked by luggage stacked to the roof. The examination also revealed that Ms Blackmore's mobile phone was located in the driver's door well. It is likely that Mr Dickson had taken possession of Ms Blackmore's phone and she could not access her phone.
106. As Mr Dickson slowed down to approach the T-intersection to the Fitzroy Development Road, Ms Blackmore climbed over to the front passenger's seat and complained of motion sickness. After moving to the front passenger seat an argument commenced. When asked what the argument was about Mr Dickson told police: "*Oh, you know, I'm a dickhead. Why am I driving and she, um, like what are we doing*".³⁰ During the argument Mr Dickson described his voice as "*loud*", he told Ms Blackmore: "*I should leave you on the fucking side of the road. This is bullshit ... this is wasting my time. Why the fuck did you come back up to Middlemount when we're driving back fucking the same way I just came? I just come here today, now we're fucking driving back there. This is bullshit*".³¹
107. Mr Dickson denied using any physical violence against Ms Blackmore at any time whilst they were in the vehicle.³²
108. When asked what Ms Blackmore's reaction was to his verbal abuse Mr Dickson told police:
- "Her reaction was to bail out of the car"*.³³
109. Mr Dickson told police he was driving the vehicle at about 100km per hour and was trying to concentrate on the road. He was not paying attention to whether Ms Blackmore has her seatbelt on and was unaware of any seatbelt alarm feature in his vehicle.³⁴ He told police: "*I was screaming – I screamed at her and the next minute she's going to the door and she's gone, mate*".³⁵

²⁹ T1.43/5-6

³⁰ T1.44/42-43

³¹ T1.45/19-38

³² T1.46/1-8

³³ T1.45/57

³⁴ T1.47/

³⁵ T1.48/19-20

110. Whilst Mr Dickson's account seemingly describes a sudden motion on Ms Blackmore's part he did describe trying to prevent her exiting the vehicle, telling police: *"I've gone like to grab her and I just can't – I couldn't get to her at all"*.³⁶
111. Mr Dickson denied doing anything to Ms Blackmore that may have caused her to exit the vehicle. He told police: *"If she wanted to do something like that – do that, why didn't she just run off with the ute? She didn't have to get into the car. I didn't try and get her into the car. She wanted to go with me ... I wouldn't have taken her in the frigging car if I knew she was gonna do that. I don't want to do this. Why can't – why can't these just be freaking normal"*.³⁷
112. Mr Dickson told police that after Ms Blackmore exited the vehicle he immediately slammed on the brakes and completed a U-turn. He located Ms Blackmore unconscious on the grassed shoulder of the road. He saw that Ms Blackmore had numerous physical injuries. He carried her back to the vehicle and placed her in the front passenger's seat.
113. Mr Dickson called Triple 0 at 12:08am on 31 December 2014. He advised the operator that Ms Blackmore was unconscious after she had jumped from his car during an argument. He immediately drove back to the Middlemount Ambulance Station under the direction of the operator. He received advice from an ambulance officer about what to do, and he took steps to attempt to keep Ms Blackmore alive. Mr Dickson was met by a paramedic at the Middlemount Ambulance Station, shortly after his arrival.
114. The first person to provide medical attention to Ms Blackmore was a male paramedic who at 12:11am was tasked to attend the Middlemount Ambulance Station and rendezvous with Mr Dickson. Upon arrival the male paramedic observed the Ms Blackmore had a number of significant injuries including a large wound to her head and deformity to both ankles suggesting they had both been broken.
115. The male paramedic was able to elicit verbal responses from Ms Blackmore and take initial steps to stabilise her condition including placing a cervical collar on her. Two female paramedics attended shortly afterwards and also provided assistance to Ms Blackmore.
116. Ms Blackmore was taken to the Dysart Hospital, upon arrival she was unconscious and did not regain consciousness during her time there. Approximately 2.5 hours later she was retrieved by The Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS) and transferred to the Townsville Hospital.
117. Ms Blackmore was unconscious when RFDS crew arrived, she was intubated and placed on mechanical ventilation. Her vital signs remained within acceptable ranges during her transfer to the Townsville Hospital.

Removal of life support

118. Ms Blackmore did not regain consciousness and remained on ventilation.

³⁶ T1.49/7-8

³⁷ T1.48-49/43-1

119. A neurosurgeon deemed that surgery would be futile and she was placed in an induced coma. Her injuries were incompatible with life. Ms Blackmore's family attended the Townsville Hospital and authorised the removal of life support.
120. She was pronounced life extinct on 2 January 2015.

Autopsy results

121. A forensic pathologist performed an autopsy on 5 January 2015. Toxicology tests were also conducted. The forensic pathologist prepared a report dated 31 July 2015.
122. No alcohol or drugs were detected in Ms Blackmore's system.
123. The forensic pathologist was of the opinion that the medical cause of Ms Blackmore's death was a head injury.
124. I accept the forensic pathologist's opinion as to the medical cause of Ms Blackmore's death.

Queensland Police conduct a record of interview

125. At about 12:43am on 31 December 2014, police from Middlemount attended the ambulance station and detained Mr Dickson. Police from the Moranbah Criminal Investigation Branch then attended the Middlemount Police Station and after arresting Mr Dickson for assault, they commenced an electronic record of interview. Mr Dickson participated in the police interview and directed police to where the incident occurred.
126. The police drove 2.8km south on the Fitzroy Development Road from the T-intersection with Dysart Middlemount Road. They observed mud tyre marks in the bitumen and located a small amount of blood approximately 1.5m from the bitumen surface on the dirt shoulder of the road. Mr Dickson returned to the police station and continued with the record of interview.
127. Mr Dickson was released later that day on 31 December 2014, without charge.
128. The interview occurred prior to any substantial evidence gathering.

Criminal Proceedings against Mr Dickson

129. On 15 January 2015, Mr Dickson was charged with the murder of Ms Blackmore and taken into police custody
130. Police investigations concluded that Ms Blackmore's death occurred in circumstances where she reasonably feared for her life whilst in the company of Mr Dickson. Due to his actions and intimidation, Ms Blackmore felt that she had no option but to flee the vehicle, which has ultimately lead to the fatal outcome.
131. Mr Dickson was indicted for the murder of Ms Blackmore; however when he was arraigned he entered a plea of guilty to the alternative charge of manslaughter following which the indictment for murder was discharged.

132. On 24 November 2016, in the Supreme Court of Queensland in Rockhampton, Mr Dickson was sentenced to seven and a half years imprisonment for the manslaughter of Ms Blackmore. A declaration was made for time served under the sentence in pre-sentence custody from 15 January 2015 to 23 November 2016 (a period of 679 days).
133. The Supreme Court set a parole eligibility date of 15 July 2017. The Parole Board declined Mr Dickson's parole application, on the grounds that he needed to complete a high intensity violence program before they would consider granting parole.
134. Mr Dickson was released to parole on 21 August 2018.
135. The sentencing remarks can be summarised as follows:
 - a) Ms Blackmore had been subjected to domestic violence. She had expressed a fear for her life and her fear was such that she established a code with her friend to obtain emergency help from police;
 - b) The events occurred against the background of acts and threats of harm, that Ms Blackmore was sufficiently fearful of what Mr Dickson might do to her. This led to her leaping from the car travelling at substantial speed and suffering catastrophic injuries;
 - c) Mr Dickson had, by his physical acts and threats, caused fear in Ms Blackmore;
 - d) Ms Blackmore's fear of significant physical harm was sufficient to risk jumping from a speeding motor vehicle – presumably as an act of attempted self-preservation;
 - e) The fear Ms Blackmore experienced was well founded given Mr Dickson's prior behaviour. Her leaping from the vehicle was a consequence of that behaviour;
 - f) There was no intent by Mr Dickson to cause Ms Blackmore's death;
 - g) There was no physical act that caused Ms Blackmore to exit the vehicle – that is, she wasn't pushed;
 - h) Mr Dickson did not foresee that Ms Blackmore would exit the car but it was foreseeable by an objective bystander, aware of all the facts. Her actions were not so disproportionate as to break the chain of causation;
 - i) Mr Dickson had a relevant criminal history including acts of violence towards females with whom he had relationships. The offences included, assault occasioning bodily harm in November 2007, two breaches of a domestic violence order, an offence of going armed so as to cause fear in April 2011, and assault occasioning bodily harm, along with seven breaches of another domestic violence order. The latter offences were dealt with on the basis that they were not motivated by anger but rather for the safety of an ex-girlfriend – an attempt, apparently, to protect her from harm;
 - j) Mr Dickson had a 10 year old son, who he had supported financially throughout his life;
 - k) Mr Dickson had a good work history;
 - l) Mr Dickson was remorseful for what had happened. He did what he could to help Ms Blackmore after she exited the vehicle;
 - m) The nature of Mr Dickson's relationship with Ms Blackmore and the significant point of disputation in the relationship, from Mr Dickson's point of view at least, was that he was concerned with Ms Blackmore's efforts to conceal her relationship with him from her family;
 - n) There was no evidence or reports of domestic violence from neighbours over a period of months;
 - o) Mr Dickson provided financial support to Ms Blackmore, to her son, and to see her reunited with her family in the Philippines;
 - p) Mr Dickson is obviously a man who has difficulty in keeping his emotions under control;

- q) The defence counsel's submission that there was reason to think that Mr Dickson could become a productive member of the community again;
- r) Mr Dickson's plea of guilty;
- s) That he supplied some of the evidence against himself by participating in a police interview;
- t) Mr Dickson, at some level, loved Ms Blackmore, but he behaved in such a way that she was in fear of her life and he did this through domestic violence;
- u) The prosecution's submission that the problem of domestic violence is a pronounced one in our community and that general deterrence, as well as personal deterrence, figured largely in that case. There must be a denunciation of Mr Dickson's conduct in acting in a violent way towards a female with whom he had a relationship; and
- v) Mr Dickson had not previously been deterred by the various punishments placed on him.

Relevant legislation applicable to this sentence

136. In October 2015 the *Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Act 2015* was passed. The outcomes of that included inserting a definition for a "domestic violence offence" into the *Criminal Code*; amending the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012* to increase penalties for contravention of protection orders and amending the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992*.
137. The amendments to the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992* created a mechanism by which offences that were also acts of domestic violence may be declared and recorded as such for the purposes of court and criminal records. That section also created a mechanism for prosecution services to apply to a court to have previous convictions for domestic violence offences declared as such.
138. Such declarations do not automatically increase the penalty that might be imposed for a domestic violence offence however they work in conjunction with s.10A of the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992* (inserted in May 2016) which treats domestic violence as a circumstance of aggravation when a court is sentencing an offender for a related criminal offence.
139. I am mindful that these legislative amendments were in force at the time Mr Dickson was sentenced, however they were not in effect at the time of Ms Blackmore's death i.e. when the offence crystallised. This raises the question of whether those new provisions would have applied retrospectively. Having regard to the decision by the Court of Appeal in *R v Hutchinson* [2018] QCA 29 I am satisfied those provisions would have applied in Mr Dickson's case.
140. Having had the opportunity to review the transcript of the sentencing submissions made by counsel at sentence it does not appear the Supreme Court of Queensland had the benefit of hearing submissions on that issue. It also appears no application was made to amend the indictment to include the 'domestic violence offence' averment or an application made to have previous convictions (that were the subject of the sentencing process) declared domestic violence offences.

Review by the Coronial Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Unit

141. The DFVDRU was established within the Coroners Court of Queensland in 2011 to provide advice and assistance to Coroners with investigations into domestic and family violence related deaths. The purpose of the unit is to assist Coroners in understanding the broader context and circumstances of the death, consider any relevant service system contact, and identify whether there were any missed opportunities for intervention or prevention.
142. The DFVDRU reviewed this case due to the nature and circumstances of Ms Blackmore's death. An extensive and thorough report was submitted to me on 11 December 2017. I acknowledge the primary author of that report, Mr Travis Heller.
143. I outline the key findings of the DFVDRU review below, including Mr Dickson's system contact, the QPS response, and his management by QCS.

Ms Blackmore had not previously reported domestic violence

144. Ms Blackmore had very limited known contact with services. She had no hospital history prior to her admission for her injuries on 31 December 2014. She saw a GP relatively regularly but there were no reported presentations associated with domestic violence, mental health concerns, or suicidal ideation.
145. Save for the report made to police by the motel manager in Bundaberg on 29 December 2014, there were no other episodes of domestic violence reported to the police involving Mr Dickson and Ms Blackmore.
146. The nature of domestic and family violence and sexual assault can be interpreted differently across cultures; and in some cultures and languages, there is no direct translation or agreed definition of domestic violence or sexual assault (often, particularly within a marriage), which further limits the recognition or reporting of this issue.

Mr Dickson's history of domestic and family violence

147. Mr Dickson had an extensive history of perpetrating acts of violence within other intimate and family relationships. Between 2007 and 2013, he had been named as a respondent in domestic violence protection orders taken out by police for four other women, as well as his father. Mr Dickson also had an extensive criminal history pertaining to domestic violence, assault, and drug related offences and he had a history of failing to comply with court orders.

Mr Dickson's perpetration of domestic violence against one of his former partners

148. Mr Dickson had a history of perpetrating domestic violence against one former partner between 2005 and 2008. Examples (from the records) include:
 - a) Pushing his former partner into oncoming traffic;

- b) Driving dangerously on the highway in a separate car whilst intimidating her;
 - c) Punching her in the head, before driving off erratically whilst his child was in the back of the car and his former partner was unbuckled, causing her to be thrown around the car; and
 - d) Non-lethally strangling her in her car, not allowing her to leave the car whilst demanding that she kiss him, biting her on the lip, and pulling her hair.
149. The police applied for a domestic violence protection order against Mr Dickson on 25 July 2007. The order was granted and extended until 2010. A temporary domestic violence order was also granted naming Mr Dickson as a respondent Mr Dickson on the Order relating to his former partner's mother. This was extended until late 2012.
150. On multiple occasions, Mr Dickson's former partner reported to police that Mr Dickson had breached the domestic violence protection order. However, on most occasions police determined that there was insufficient evidence to pursue criminal charges against Mr Dickson.

Mr Dickson's perpetration of domestic violence against another former partner

151. Mr Dickson also had a history of perpetrating domestic violence against another former partner (and an incident of perpetrating violence towards her friend) between 2010 and 2011. Examples (from the material available to me) include:
- a) Requiring his former partner to phone him before work, during her work breaks, and again when she got home;
 - b) Socially isolating his former partner and making around 50 phone calls to her in one evening, when she spent a weekend with family and friends;
 - c) Accessing her emails and accusing her of being unfaithful;
 - d) Pushing her, verbally abusing her, non-lethally strangling her, and preventing her from leaving or calling her friends for help, when she attempted to leave him;
 - e) Taking her phone away from her when driving home from a camping trip, slapping and punching her in the head, pulling on her hair, verbally abusing her, threatening to kill her, and insisting that she write a suicide note; and
 - f) Pulling a knife on his former partner's friend, demanding to know where his former partner was, and threatening to kill her.
152. The first reported episode of domestic violence against Mr Dickson's other former partner occurred on 22 September 2010. The police took Mr Dickson into custody and made a successful application for a domestic violence protection order.
153. Mr Dickson's former partner reported Mr Dickson for breaching the domestic violence protection order on two occasions. Mr Dickson was charged on the first occurrence but the second was determined to be unfounded, (the evidence that Mr Dickson had tried to 'friend request' her on Facebook).
154. At the time of the incident involving the knife (paragraph 151 (f) above refers), Mr Dickson had three current domestic violence protection orders against him. The police arrested him and took him into custody. He was held at the Maryborough Correctional Centre on remand for six months. This was Mr Dickson's first period of custody. On 6 April 2011, Mr Dickson was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment and granted immediate release on parole.

Mr Dickson's perpetration of family violence against his parents

155. Mr Dickson had a recorded history of perpetrating family violence against his parents between 2010 and 2013. Examples included:
 - a) Consuming illicit substances then attacking his mother, knocking her to the ground and non-lethally strangling her until she lost consciousness;
 - b) Attacking his father, repeatedly kicking him, and breaking several of his ribs; and
 - c) Leaving a threatening phone message that he would end his parents' lives and burn their house down.
156. Mr Dickson's parents did not initially report their son's violence against them to the police for fear of retribution. However, when he threatened to kill them on 4 August 2013, they decided to notify the police. At that time, they advised the police that their son was a heavy drug user who smoked cannabis frequently and that he suffered from mental illness but refused to seek treatment.
157. The police subsequently phoned Mr Dickson. He advised that he was away working at the mines and was unable to attend a police station.
158. Mr Dickson acknowledged to police that his behaviour was unacceptable and he was informed that the police were applying for a domestic violence protection order. A temporary protection order was issued on 7 August 2013 and a final order was issued on 18 September 2013.

The adequacy of the police response to reports of domestic violence against Mr Dickson

159. In the opinion of the DFVDRU, there were opportunities for better assessment and decision-making on the part of the police officers who responded to the report of domestic violence at the motel in Bundaberg on 29 December 2014.
160. The responding police officers completed a 'Domestic Violence Protective Assessment Framework'. They identified the following risk factors:
 - a) Separation / strangulation / suffocation;
 - b) Respondent history of violence;
 - c) Ongoing conflict; and
 - d) Violent threats.
161. The police noted that Ms Blackmore was fearful and they assessed her as 'high risk'. They noted that both Mr Dickson and Ms Blackmore had declined a referral to support services when attending the incident.
162. Although the police assessed Ms Blackmore as 'high risk', their response did not align with that assessment. The police Operational Procedures Manual in place at the time recommended a 'proactive' policing strategy in circumstances where a victim of domestic violence is assessed as high risk.
163. According to the police Operational Procedures Manual, police officers should take a respondent into custody if they reasonably suspect that the person has committed

domestic violence and they believe there is a danger of personal injury or property damage.

Risk factors at separation

164. The DFVDRU report noted that the responding police officers did not fully understand the dynamics of domestic and family violence. While leaving a relationship characterised by domestic violence may seem the obvious solution to prevent further abuse, in many cases the risk of being hurt or killed is greatly increased when women make a decision to leave.^{38, 39}
165. When a perpetrator senses they may be losing control over their partner, an escalation in abuse may occur in an attempt to regain or maintain this control, or to punish their partner for leaving.⁴⁰ Post-separation violence tends to be more serious, more obsessive, more likely to involve stalking, and most importantly, more likely to lead to a homicide than violence which occurs within an intact relationship.⁴¹
166. In June 2017 the State of Queensland (Queensland Health) published a literature review that considered non-lethal strangulation in domestic and family violence.⁴² It acknowledged the limited data available in the Australian context. However a study published in 2013 of 656 cross-applications for protection orders filed in the Beenleigh and Brisbane Magistrates Courts provides highly relevant data.⁴³
167. The cross-applications studied were filed with the courts during the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 financial years. The 656 cross-applications were based on a cohort of 328 female aggrieved and corresponding 328 male aggrieved. All of the parties to the cross-applications were in heterosexual intimate relationships.
168. When reviewing the cross-applications that were filed in the courts the study looked at the allegations made by the parties against each other. Of the allegations made by the 328 female aggrieved against their male intimate partners, 42 (12.8%) made an allegation of attempted murder. Within that subset of female aggrieved, 38 (11.6%) alleged strangulation as the method of attempted murder.

Supervision of Mr Dickson by Queensland Corrective Services

169. Mr Dickson was not under the supervision of QCS at the time of Ms Blackmore's death. Mr Dickson did however have a history of custodial and community based supervision for offences related to domestic and family violence.

³⁸ Hotton, T. (2001). Spousal Violence after Marital Separation. *Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics*. 21 (7). Cat. No. 85-002.

³⁹ Anderson, D.K. & Saunders, D.G. (2003). Leaving an Abusive Partner: an empirical review of predictors, the process of leaving and psychological well-being. *Trauma, Violence and Abuse* 4(2), 163-191.

⁴⁰ Fleury, R.E., Sullivan, C.M. & Bybee, D.I. (2000). When Ending the Relationship does not End the Violence: Women's Experiences of Violence by Former Partners. *Violence Against Women*, 12, 1363-83.

⁴¹ Johnson, H. & Hotton, T. (2003). Losing Control: Homicide Risk in Estranged and Intact Intimate Relationships. *Homicide Studies*, 7, 58-84.

⁴² State of Queensland (Queensland Health), 'A Health Response to Non-lethal Strangulation in Domestic and Family Violence'

⁴³ Heather Douglas and Robin Fitzgerald, 'Legal Processes and Gendered Violence: Cross-Applications for Domestic Violence Protection Orders' (2013) 36 *University of New South Wales Law Journal* 56

170. Mr Dickson had contact with the court system prior to Ms Blackmore's death. He was placed on a 14 month probation order for breaching a domestic violence protection order and driving without due care (the order was due to expire on 15 May 2010).
171. An 'Immediate Risk Needs Assessment' was completed on 15 May 2009, which noted that Mr Dickson minimised his offending and the extent of violence against his former partner.
172. An 'Offender Management Plan' was also developed to inform intervention and supervision strategies. 'Relationships' was identified as a focus area for rehabilitation. It was assessed that Mr Dickson had ongoing dysfunction within his relationship with his former partner. That issue was given a 'high priority', that is, to be addressed within three months. Goals were set for Mr Dickson to develop insight into appropriate behaviours within relationships.
173. At the time, Mr Dickson indicated that he was seeing a counsellor through Lifeline. In addition, the probation and parole officer referred him to Relationships Australia, for services relating to domestic violence and relationship counselling. A collateral check was undertaken by the parole and probation officer, which identified that Mr Dickson was "*still angry with his ex-partner and that he would benefit from completing a parenting program*".
174. Mr Dickson reportedly had monthly contact with a counsellor from Relationships Australia between October 2009 and February 2010. However, when his counsellor left the organisation, Mr Dickson informed his probation and parole officer that he didn't feel he would benefit from a new counsellor. The probation and parole officer contacted Relationships Australia to check this but because Mr Dickson had not completed an 'Authority to Disclose' form, they were unable to provide any further information about Mr Dickson's intervention. Mr Dickson reported that he would be happy to see another counsellor if required, but the probation and parole officer decided on 15 March 2010 that no further referrals were required.
175. On 8 October 2010, Mr Dickson was remanded in custody for a range of offences after he had threatened his former partner's friend with a knife. This offending occurred outside the operational period of the earlier probation order but I note it was only some three months after that order had expired. On 6 April 2011, he was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment, with immediate release to court ordered parole.
176. Mr Dickson presented to his probation and parole officer on 7 April 2011. He denied any thoughts of harming others. He falsely claimed his breaches of the domestic violence protection order in relation to his former partner were for two emails that he sent regarding car insurance and retrieval of property. He also denied the incident where he held his former partner's friend at knifepoint and advised his probation and parole officer that he only entered a plea of guilty so he could be released from custody. The probation and parole officer had access to the official version of events and noted, "*the offender appears to minimise his behaviour. He is reluctant to accept responsibility for any part in the incidents*".
177. I regard the use of the phrase: "*the offender appears to minimise his behaviour [and] is reluctant to accept responsibility*" as an understatement given the access QCS had to the official version of events from the court.
178. On 11 April 2011, the police advised Mr Dickson's probation and parole officer that they would be charging Mr Dickson with further breaches of the domestic violence

protection order because he had again attempted to contact his former partner, this time through Facebook. The police reportedly held great concerns for Mr Dickson's former partner's safety. However, they ultimately determined that the reported breach was unfounded, and no further remedial action was taken by the police or Mr Dickson's parole and probation officer.

179. I have had regard to s.201 of the *Corrective Services Act 2006* that empowered (and continues to do so) the Chief Executive to suspend Mr Dickson's parole if there was a reasonable belief that Mr Dickson was either a "*serious and immediate risk of harm to someone else*" or "*pose[d] an unacceptable risk of committing an offence*".
180. Similarly, I have had regard to s.205 of that Act that empowered a parole board to take the same action although they were not required to consider the 'immediacy' of any risk when deciding whether to suspend a prisoner subject to a parole order.
181. The decision by the parole officer, whether to recommend a suspension of Mr Dickson's parole, was apparently predicated on his being formally charged by the QPS with an offence.
182. On 23 May 2011, Mr Dickson's probation and parole officer developed an Offender Management Plan, highlighting three rehabilitative needs for Mr Dickson:
 - a) Anger management;
 - b) Domestic and family violence; and
 - c) Cognitive skills.
183. The action taken by Mr Dickson's probation and parole officer was to refer Mr Dickson to two programs being run by Lifeline; 'Alternatives to Aggression' and 'Men and Family Relationships'.
184. Lifeline later reported to the probation and parole officer that Mr Dickson had completed two sessions and "*at this stage counselling is considered completed however ... should [Mr Dickson] enter a new relationship, he should be re-referred, as this could be a trigger to set off negative emotions or place him at risk*". It is unclear whether any risk to a potential new partner was also considered.
185. Despite Mr Dickson's rehabilitation needs being identified as 'high priority' on 23 May 2011, Mr Dickson did not contact Lifeline until August 2011. His first session was not until 17 August 2011 and his second session was not until October 2011. Mr Dickson cited difficulties in getting to appointments due to his shift work roster and a lack of transportation. He had to be reminded several times of his obligation to attend Lifeline counselling.
186. I note a failure to comply with a parole order can also be taken in to consideration by either the Chief Executive or a parole board when deciding whether to suspend a prisoner subject to a parole order.
187. The DFVDRU opined that that long-lasting and pervasive change had not been achieved. Such change was impossible to achieve in just two counselling sessions.
188. A lack of protracted intervention appears to have inhibited the possibility of behavioural change, noting empirical evidence regarding the efficacy of men's behaviour change programs is not robust.

Other relevant considerations arising from the DFVDRU report including domestic and family violence among culturally and linguistically diverse persons

189. In the Australian context, the term culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) is generally defined as a person born overseas in countries other than those where English is the main language. It may also be used more broadly to describe people who are Australian-born and have at least one parent who was born overseas; those who speak a language other than English at home; or people of a diverse religion.⁴⁴ Ms Blackmore, can therefore be considered as coming from a CALD background.
190. People from CALD backgrounds may have arrived in Australia under various circumstances, including as migrants, refugees, international students or unaccompanied minors. Across all categories of arrival, they may face a number of challenges or barriers, including limited English-language skills, limited social networks, little financial security and minimal understanding of how to navigate social services.
191. Although people from a CALD background may share certain characteristics and challenges, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of this cohort, with the associated need for targeted responses to addressing domestic and family violence, dependent on individual need. Further, a disproportionate focus on the disadvantages and challenges faced by women from a CALD background fails to capitalise on the strength and resilience of these women who are often successful survivors with a capacity to flourish.
192. Ascertaining the true extent of domestic and family violence in CALD families and communities is difficult as studies and surveys have produced mixed findings. As it currently stands, there is limited information and no uncontested national data available on the prevalence of violence against women from CALD backgrounds.
193. Generally, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data indicates that rates of physical assault victimisation were highest for Australian-born people, followed by those born in main-English speaking countries (such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and the United States of America). In the ABS Personal Safety Survey, it was reported that Australian-born women were more likely to report experiencing both physical and sexual assault in the previous 12 months than those born overseas.
194. Similarly, the International Violence against Women Survey indicates that women from English-speaking backgrounds reported higher levels of physical, sexual and any other violence compared to non-English speaking background women over their lifetime.
195. However, with respect to these results, there is consistent evidence suggesting that women from CALD backgrounds are less likely to report domestic and family violence to police or access mainstream services. As such the lower prevalence rates may be because of a range of factors including an under-reporting of abuse by participants. In this sense, personal, cultural, religious and language factors may serve as a barrier to this cohort's participation in these types of surveys; or, those who did participate

⁴⁴ Department of Social Services. (2015). *Hearing her Voice: Report from the kitchen table conversations with culturally and linguistically diverse women on violence against women and their children*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

may have been less likely to report episodes of physical and sexual violence, or openly discuss that information with survey interviewers.

196. It is also noted that the nature of domestic and family violence and sexual assault can be interpreted differently across cultures; and in some cultures and languages, there is no direct translation or agreed definition of domestic violence or sexual assault (often, particularly within a marriage), which further limits the recognition or reporting of this issue.
197. In 2014-15, CALD female leaders hosted a series of 'kitchen table' conversations throughout Australia with women from more than 40 ethnic and cultural backgrounds about violence against women and their children culminating in a report outlining key issues and suggested responses raised by participants in the conversations.
198. With respect to the nature of violence, this consultation report noted:
 - a) There was a 'nuanced understanding of the range of behaviours that constitute domestic and family violence' expressed by participants, however, this term itself was not commonly used amongst CALD communities. The women referred not only to physical violence, but other behaviours aimed at exerting power and control over women such as isolation from family and friends, threats against children, control of finances and emotional abuse;
 - b) Intimate partner violence was the most frequently identified form of violence, however there was significant acknowledgement among participants that domestic violence can and does occur between other family members, and a victim may be subject to abuse by multiple family members. For example, it was noted that CALD women are more likely to live in extended family households, and some participants referred to violence and abuse perpetrated by mothers-in-law (often in tandem with a husband or a husband's siblings), adolescent sons and other family members;
 - c) As the CALD population in Australia ages, abuse of parents or elderly relatives (particularly those with reduced mobility or dementia) is becoming more common; and
 - d) Sexual assault, particularly by a spouse or partner, was less readily spoken about or identified by participants. It was suggested that some CALD communities do not recognise forcing a spouse or partner to have sex as sexual assault because sexual access is considered 'a husband's right'.
199. Issues arising for victims of domestic and family violence were commensurate with those experienced by their non-CALD counterparts. For example, finding accommodation, achieving financial independence, gaining or undertaking employment, obtaining legal advice and locating appropriate, affordable child-care are prevalent issues for both groups of women.
200. Women and children from CALD backgrounds may experience heightened vulnerability to violence for myriad reasons including:
 - a) Limited or no ability to speak English which may make it harder to seek support from police, services and the courts, especially if those professionals do not routinely offer interpreters;

- b) A lack of financial autonomy particularly in circumstances where visa restrictions limit a person's capacity to participate in employment or training opportunities; and
- c) Social isolation from the broader community and in some cases, other members of their cultural group in Australia.

201. With regards to this case, Ms Blackmore was subjected to social isolation as she felt she had to keep her relationship with Mr Dickson secret from her family for cultural reasons, which was a source of conflict between the couple.

202. While it was reported by police that Ms Blackmore spoke in "*broken English*", there was no indication from available information that she was unable to effectively communicate in English. Notably, when police made an application for a protection order for Ms Blackmore, they did not endorse the question on the form indicating that Ms Blackmore required an interpreter. However, it may be true that, despite an appropriate level of literacy, there were underlying cultural communication barriers, which may become more apparent in times of distress.

203. The Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence made the recommendation that interpreter services be provided for victims when engaging with police and the justice system. However, responding to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse victims of domestic and family violence requires a greater understanding of violence in the victim's cultural context than just the interpretation of language. This presents a significant challenge to services who work with victims (and perpetrators) from a range of cultures who may present with distinctive understandings of abuse, violence and normalised behaviours within their own context. In this respect there is a need for frontline officers to be culturally competent to remove barriers to help-seeking, and enhance responses to this cohort.

Lethality risk factors

204. The recognition of multiple risk factors within a relationship allows for a comprehensive assessment of risk, safety planning and, potentially the prevention of future deaths related to domestic and family violence. Assessing and determining the severity of domestic and family violence can assist services to identify and quantify the level of risk or danger; allocate resources; and assist victims to understand that they may be at a high risk of violence against them.

205. The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee have developed a lethality risk assessment coding system based on their review of all domestic violence related deaths between 2003 and 2012. A list of 40 risk factors that indicate the potential for lethality in relationship have been identified.

206. Within this case, using the same coding system, the following lethality risk factors have been identified:

- a) History of violence outside the family by perpetrator;
- b) History of domestic violence (current partner);
- c) History of domestic violence (previous partners);
- d) Prior threats to kill victim;
- e) Prior attempts to isolate the victim;
- f) Prior destruction or deprivation of victim's property;
- g) Choked/strangled victim in the past;
- h) Victim and perpetrator living in common-law;
- i) Actual or pending separation;

- j) Sexual jealousy; and
- k) Victim's intuitive sense of fear of perpetrator

207. In total, eleven lethality risk indicators were identified. The recognition of multiple risk factors should be interpreted as a red flag requiring immediate response.
208. Non-lethal strangulation was a feature of the violence perpetrated by Mr Dickson against Ms Blackmore, but also against former intimate partners. Strangulation can result in a loss of consciousness and is a key way to assert dominance and authority over the life of the other, creating intense fear, and can be used repeatedly, often with impunity. One study into non-lethal strangulation found that:
- a) most strangulation cases produce minor or no visible injury;
 - b) many victims, however, suffer internal injuries and have documentable symptoms;
 - c) strangulation is a gendered crime – virtually all perpetrators are men;
 - d) most abusers do not strangle to kill, they strangle to show they can kill;
 - e) victims often suffer major long-term emotional and physical impacts; and
 - f) victims of prior strangulation are seven times more likely to become homicide victims.
209. According to World Health Organisation statistics, strangulation is a relatively common cause of homicide death, particularly for women. Prior attempted, non-lethal strangulation is one of the best predictors for the subsequent homicide of victims with research suggesting that the odds of becoming an attempted homicide victim increase by 700 per cent, and the odds of becoming a homicide victim increase by 800 per cent for women who had previously been strangled by their partner.
210. In Queensland, this issue was recently considered by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence who recommended the creation of a specific offence for strangulation in recognition of the significant risk associated with this act in intimate partner relationships. Whilst the act of non-fatal strangulation was covered by a number of existing criminal offence provisions in Queensland ranging from common assault to attempted murder, the creation of a new, separate offence was recommended given the significance of strangulation in the domestic context.
211. This is particularly salient with respect to the allegations made by Ms Blackmore to the police two days before the death in which she alleged that Mr Dickson had non-lethally strangled her. The responding police officers noted there were no visible physical injuries to Ms Blackmore, but acknowledged the strangulation as a category one risk factor in the DV-PAF. The recently developed and implemented Vulnerable Persons Domestic Violence Training for police officers provides advice on the identification of additional physical signs and symptoms which may indicate that strangulation has occurred (see below).
212. Strangulation is a particularly gendered form of violence in which most perpetrators are men, and nearly all victims are female, and despite its strong association with increased lethality and harm, it is often misidentified or minimised by victims, police and the courts. Indeed, Mr Dickson's former partner reported to police that Mr Dickson had 'grabbed me around the back of the neck and pushed his fingers hard into the side of my neck', minimising the severity of the act. Similarly because of this lack of recognition of the severity of the offence, where it is reported, it is critical that victims are provided with appropriate advice and support to ensure they access medical treatment and other supports.

Legislative and Organisational Changes since Ms Blackmore's Death

213. Since Ms Blackmore's death, there has been an increased recognition of the devastating impact of domestic and family violence on individuals, families and communities in Queensland.
214. Most notably, the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence, chaired by Dame Quentin Bryce, identified issues with health, justice, and other service responses to victims of domestic and family violence. In their report, 'Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland' (2015), the taskforce made recommendations to:
- a) Improve training and practice;
 - b) Improve cross-agency information sharing, collaboration and integration; and
 - c) Strengthen legislative provisions, such as the introduction of a stand-alone offence for non-lethal strangulation.
215. In April 2016, the Queensland Government passed legislative amendments that created a specific offence (s.315A of the Queensland Criminal Code) for non-lethal choking, suffocation or strangulation of a person in a domestic setting. The offence is punishable by seven years imprisonment. The offence of choking, suffocation or strangulation recognises that those acts are not only inherently dangerous but also highly predictive of an escalation in domestic violence offending including homicide.
216. In addition to these legislative changes the Queensland Government has committed to publishing and making publicly available, data about the number of applications for protection orders filed, protection orders made, penalties imposed for breaching those orders and the number of strangulation offences.⁴⁵ That information is now available at: <https://www.courts.qld.gov.au/court-users/researchers-and-public/stats>.
217. Of particular relevance to the issues identified above by the DFVDRU, the Taskforce report included recommendations to the QPS that are intended to:
- a) Improve the criminal investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of domestic and family violence;
 - b) Achieve a more pro-active investigation and protection policy;
 - c) Ensure that arrest is prioritised where a risk assessment indicates the action is appropriate; and
 - d) Improve governance, supervision, and training of police officers in relation to domestic and family violence.
218. The recommendations aimed at enhancing interagency responses more broadly, has resulted in the establishment of 'high risk teams' in trial sites across the state that include police as core members.
219. The Queensland corrections system is also undergoing extensive transformation as part of the 'Queensland Parole System Review (2016)'. The review identified issues similar to those identified by the DFVDRU in this case, in terms of the need for a

⁴⁵ Queensland Government 2018, *Queensland to publish domestic and family violence statistics*, viewed 1 Feb 2019, <http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2018/5/27/queensland-to-publish-domestic-and-family-violence-statistics>

greater focus on rehabilitation of offenders to prevent future recidivism. In their final report, multiple recommendations were made that collectively aim to improve the assessment tools and the intervention programs used by QCS. The Queensland Government has accepted the majority of the recommendations made within this report, and implementation of these important reforms is underway across Queensland.

Queensland Police Response to Coroner dated 1 November 2018

220. I provided the QPS with an opportunity to comment on any changes and improvements (by way of policies, procedures, standards and training) implemented and relevant to front line attendances at, and management of, incidents of domestic violence since the death of Ms Blackmore. A comprehensive and considered response was received from the QPS on 1 November 2018 under the hand of Steve Gollschewski APM, Deputy Commissioner, Crime, Counter-Terrorism & Specialist Operations. I provide a summary of the response provided by the QPS at paragraphs 221 - 234 below.

Organisational Changes within Queensland Police Service

221. In late 2015 a Deputy Commissioner was appointed to oversee their Domestic and Family Violence Cultural Change Program. The role of State Domestic and Family Violence Coordinator role was also reinstated, although it was not clear when that role had been removed.

222. Also in late 2015 a specific Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons Unit (DFVVP Unit) was established whose primary function is to deliver reforms related to vulnerable persons, particularly those affected by domestic and family violence and impaired mental capacity. In 2016 two other units were amalgamated with the DFVVP Unit such that it now has responsibility for other pertinent social issues such as elder abuse, disability and suicide prevention.

Response to Legislative Changes

223. The QPS acknowledged the legislative amendments to the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012* in shaping the future direction in which domestic and family violence is approached and investigated.

224. Significantly the legislative changes now allow officers of the QPS to issue 'Police Protection Notices' to provide immediate protection to victims, and other persons at risk of domestic and family violence.

225. The QPS also acknowledged the legislative changes allow more effective sharing of information with other agencies which provides a more integrated service response to victims of domestic and family violence.

226. The QPS also acknowledge and welcome the introduction of the new offence of choking, suffocation and strangulation in a domestic setting.

Changes to Queensland Police Service Procedures in Responding to Domestic Violence

227. Following amendments to the Bail Act the QPS has also revised its procedures with respect to bail. Those charged with domestic violence offences and applying for bail are not entitled to a presumption of bail. The onus is on the defendant to show cause as to why bail should be granted. This change also enables judicial officers, subject to the provision of comprehensive affidavit material from the QPS, to make informed decisions about the nature of risks of granting bail and conditions that might be imposed to protect victims and reduce the likelihood of further acts of domestic violence.

Introduction of Additional Training Packages

228. The QPS has also introduced the Vulnerable Persons Training package. The package is an online training module that officers can access to ensure their knowledge, needed to comply with the legislation and associated policies and procedures, is current.
229. In addition to the online training there are also face-to-face workshops with a strong emphasis on cultural change. The primary message given to participants in the workshops is “*there is always a need to stop and review our actions and reflect on how our attitudes affect the way we do our job directly and indirectly*”.
230. The training package is subject to review to ensure it remains appropriate to the needs of victims of domestic and family violence and is inclusive of the different people requiring assistance.

Other Actions taken by the Queensland Police Service

231. The QPS in conjunction with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General worked collaboratively with corresponding state and territory agencies in the development of the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme which commenced on 25 November 2017.
232. That scheme has helped streamline law enforcement and legal processes relating to the service and recognition of protection orders between the states and territories.
233. The QPS also engaged an independent evaluation of their Protective Assessment Framework from 2013. That evaluation was conducted in 2017 to ensure the framework was still fit for purpose. Recommended changes are being implemented in phases.
234. As recently as December 2018 the QPS has commenced a trial of two Domestic and Family Violence Coordinators in their Brisbane Police Communications Centre. This trial is aimed at on-call, specialist advice to officers that are responding to incidents of domestic and family violence.

Conclusion and Findings

235. Ms Blackmore's death occurred at separation and during a period of prolonged violence perpetrated by her intimate partner. She died within 40 hours of her first and only report of domestic violence to police.
236. The warning signs should have been unambiguous to the police. Mr Dickson had a significant recorded and known history of domestic violence against former partners and his parents which specifically included incidents of dangerous driving within the context of domestic violence, and the non-lethal strangulation of two former partners. There was a strikingly similar *modus operandi*. A known pattern of behaviour had well and truly emerged.
237. Ms Blackmore told police (per the Form 1 Police Report of Death to a Coroner):
- '...that Dickson had grabbed her around the throat with one hand, choking her and stated he didn't care if he killed her because jail was easier than being with her. Blackmore told police on that occasion that they had been in a relationship for 8 months and that he had been physically abusive the whole time. Dickson told police at the scene that the argument was verbal only and that they had now separated'.*
238. This case highlights the importance of training in the nuances of domestic violence for front line police officers. The police who attended the domestic violence incident at the Bundaberg motel assessed Ms Blackmore as 'high risk' but their actions did not align with that assessment. Would the decisions made by the police officers have been different if they had spoken to the motel manager? I am of the view that it was a lost opportunity to gather the best evidence in real time.
239. Police who are called to a domestic violence call out wear 'two hats': (1) to assess the need for a civil protection order and (2) to assess actual or potential criminality.
240. Police officers, particularly those that are junior or lack experience and training in the arena of domestic violence should be encouraged, if not mandated to seek advice from a senior police officer, such as the District Duty Officer when attending incidents such as these. An informed decision based on the known information and advice from experienced officers, would go some way to optimising the response of front line officers in relation to incidents of domestic violence.
241. Ms Blackmore may not have felt the need to return to Middlemount on her own to collect her passport and belongings if she had been provided with further police assistance (perhaps escorting her there, or diverting her to the Middlemount police).
242. A referral to a women's shelter or domestic violence help line would have ensured adequate supports were in place for Ms Blackmore. A DV referral would have likely resulted in assistance for Ms Blackmore to retrieve her belongings from the Middlemount residence, and an escort to a safe house. Her decision to 'go it alone' (because she was not provided with any other options) placed her at certain risk.
243. Ms Blackmore was all the more vulnerable by virtue of the fact she was a Filipino woman, English was not her first language, and she resided in Middlemount (a remote and isolated location). Her physical isolation was compounded by her isolation from family, including her children. Her support network and resources were extremely limited. She told the motel manager that Mr Dickson had taken \$400 from her purse, removing her access to those cash reserves.

244. Ms Blackmore's default safety plan, to use a verbal code to signal her friend if in peril after her return to Middlemount, failed.
245. The terror experienced by Ms Blackmore in the last days, hours and minutes of her life precipitated her fatal decision to exit a vehicle travelling at 100 kilometres per hour so as to escape her abuser.
246. Based on Ms Blackmore's expressed intention to separate from Mr Dickson and return to Brisbane, the fact she had secured a rental unit in Brisbane, her request for assistance to both the motel manager and police, the use of a coded message to seek help from her friend, and the absence of any previous expression of suicidal ideation to friends, family or others, I have concluded that Ms Blackmore did not intend to kill herself and that her actions were a desperate act of self-preservation.
247. I find that it is more probable than not that she exited the vehicle to escape the terror of the events unfolding inside whilst in fear for her life.
248. I find that Rinabel Tiglao Blackmore died as a result of a fatal head injury sustained when she exited a moving vehicle driven by her intimate male partner Shane Dickson at a speed of approximately 100 kilometres per hour on the Dingo Mount Flora Road, Middlemount, approximately 2.8km south of the Dysart Middlemount Road intersection.
249. Her actions occurred in the context of a prolonged episode of domestic violence. In the 40 hours preceding her exit from the vehicle, Ms Blackmore had been subjected to several causally connected episodes of verbal abuse and significant physical violence by Mr Dickson.
250. I do not intend to hold an Inquest as I have sufficient information before me to formulate my findings into to the circumstances surrounding Ms Blackmore's death.

Condolences

251. I offer my sincerest condolences to Ms Blackmore's children, and her wider family, and thank them for providing their consent to publish these non-inquest findings in the public interest and to assist and inform the current public discourse regarding domestic and family violence.

Acknowledgements

252. I acknowledge the considered and comprehensive response provided to me by the QPS. The QPS have committed to finding new and better ways to deal with domestic violence on the front line – including improved training and to support less experienced officers when attending incidents such as those described in these findings, where so many (often unknown) important factors are at play, usually out of the hearing and sight of the officers.
253. I also acknowledge and thank Professor Heather Douglas, Deputy Dean of Research at the TC Beirne School of Law (University of Queensland) and Gael Strack, CEO and Co-Founder of Alliance for HOPE International & Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention (San Diego, California) for reviewing these findings prior to publication and providing relevant research material.

254. I thank Counsel Assisting the Northern Coroner, Mr Joseph Crawfoot, for his invaluable insight and assistance to me during this significant investigation.

Findings required by s. 45

Identity of deceased-

Rinabel Tiglao Blackmore.

How she died-

I find that Rinabel Tiglao Blackmore died as a result of a fatal head injury sustained when she exited a moving vehicle driven by her intimate male partner Shane Dickson at a speed of approximately 100 kilometres per hour on the Dingo Mount Flora Road, Middlemount, approximately 2.8km south of the Dysart Middlemount Road intersection. Her actions occurred in the context of a prolonged episode of domestic violence. In the preceding 40 hours she had been subjected to several causally connected episodes of verbal abuse and significant physical violence by Mr Dickson. Ms Blackmore's actions were a desperate act of self-preservation. I find that it is more probable than not that she exited the vehicle to escape the terror of the events unfolding inside whilst in fear for her life.

Place of death-

The Townsville Hospital, Queensland 4810.

Date of death-

2 January 2015.

Cause of death-

Head injury.

I now close the coronial investigation.

Nerida Wilson
Northern Coroner
4 April 2019