



CORONERS COURT OF QUEENSLAND

FINDINGS OF INVESTIGATION

CITATION: **Non-inquest findings into the death of an Indian citizen**

TITLE OF COURT: Coroners Court

JURISDICTION: BRISBANE

DATE: 1st May 2025

FILE NO(s): 2023/4771

FINDINGS OF: Carol Lee, Coroner

CATCHWORDS: CORONERS: Drowning- Indian citizen- Unpatrolled and hazardous beach-Warnings.

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Background

Introduction

The deceased was a 23-year-old Indian citizen ('Indian citizen') who was born on 2 January 2000 and died on 8 October 2023 at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH).

Queensland Police Service (Police) reported the Indian citizen's death to the coroner because his death appeared to be a violent or unnatural death and fell within the definition of a reportable death in the *Coroners Act 2003*.

The role of a coroner is to investigate reportable deaths to establish, if possible, the cause of death and how the person died. The purpose of a coronial investigation is to establish facts, not to cast blame or determine criminal or civil liability.

Circumstances

The Indian citizen was a 23-year-old man who resided in St Lucia with housemates. He had no known medical conditions.

On 1 October 2023, the Indian citizen was with his 2 housemates visiting Stradbroke Island for the day. After going for a walk and taking photos, they decided to go for a swim at a secluded beach (Frenchman's Beach) at Point Lookout. All 3 soon found themselves in difficulty and needed rescuing. The Indian citizen was observed to be caught in a rip and taken out to deeper water and was noted to swallow a large amount of water and becoming submersed for approximately 5 minutes, before being rescued by SLSC lifeguards. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) was commenced at the scene and continued by Queensland Ambulance Service personnel upon their arrival. He was initially in asystole (no heart rhythm) but had return of spontaneous circulation (the heart started beating again). He remained unconscious and was conveyed to the RBWH via Care flight. Imaging (including CT and x-ray) showed features of aspiration in the lungs and (initially) the criteria for brain death was not met. He was diagnosed with hypoxic ischaemic brain injury secondary to out of hospital cardiac arrest, due to drowning. He was admitted to the intensive care unit and his admission was further complicated by acute lung injury, biochemical derangement, and acute renal failure. A follow-up brain angiogram undertaken on 5 October 2023 showed features consistent with brain death, and brain death was formally confirmed on 7 October 2023. Following discussions with his family, the Indian citizen was extubated the following day and was declared deceased at 16:14 hours.

According to information given to Police, the Indian citizen could not swim. Frenchman's Beach is unpatrolled and was known for strong currents and hazardous conditions. Signage was displayed to this effect.

Ultimately, Police have not identified any suspicious circumstances surrounding the Indian citizen's death.

Autopsy examination

Forensic Pathologist's Examination

An external examination, imaging, document review and toxicology studies were undertaken.

The opinion of the forensic pathologist as to the cause of death is based on consideration of the circumstances of death and a post-mortem examination including associated imaging and testing.

The forensic pathologist summarised the findings at autopsy as follows:

1. The CT scan and external examination findings were consistent with the purported history and antemortem imaging. The brain was oedematous and there were bilateral pleural effusions. There were features of medical intervention and there were no significant injuries.

In the opinion of the forensic pathologist, the cause of death was:

- 1(a) Hypoxic ischaemic encephalopathy, *due to or as a consequence of*
- 1(b) Near-drowning.

Toxicology

Toxicological analysis was undertaken on ante-mortem samples. No alcohol or illicit drugs were detected.

Conclusions

After considering the material obtained during the coronial investigation, I consider that I have sufficient information to make the necessary findings in relation to the Indian citizen's death. I am not satisfied that it is in the public interest to hold an Inquest as, I am of the view that drawing attention to the circumstances of this death is unlikely to prevent deaths in similar circumstances happening in the future. There is also no uncertainty or conflict of evidence as to justify the use of the judicial forensic process and no suspicious circumstances that have not been resolved or resulted in criminal charges. On that basis I have determined that an Inquest is not required.

I accept the forensic pathologist's opinion as to the cause of death and find that the cause of the Indian citizen's death was:

- 1(a) Hypoxic ischaemic encephalopathy, *due to or as a consequence of*
- 1(b) Near-drowning.

I note that in May 2023, Royal Life Saving Society Australia produced a Drowning Report with a 10- year analysis of drowning deaths that had occurred in Southeast Queensland. This was published and was the subject of deliberation at the Southeast Queensland Water Safety Forum held on the Gold Coast on 15 and 16 May 2023, which I attended. Relevantly,

of the 366 people that drowned in the region in the last 10 years, 25% of these occurred at the beach. A Southeast Queensland Water Safety Strategy 2023-2027 has been developed and makes recommendations on drowning prevention strategies through targeted campaigns, education of communities about risk and prevention strategies.

I extend my condolences to the Indian citizen's family and friends for their loss.

Findings required by s.45

Identity of the deceased –	An Indian citizen
How he died –	On 1 October 2023, a 23-year-old Indian citizen drowned after becoming caught in a rip whilst swimming at an unpatrolled and hazardous beach at Point Lookout. Following the provision of prompt resuscitation measures by first responders, spontaneous return of circulation was achieved, and he was airlifted to a tertiary hospital for ongoing care. Despite treatment, he progressed to brain death as a result of sustaining a hypoxic brain injury secondary to out of hospital cardiac arrest, due to drowning and succumbed to his injuries on 8 October 2023.
Place of death –	RBWH QLD AUSTRALIA
Date of death–	08/10/2023
Cause of death –	1(a) Hypoxic Ischaemic encephalopathy 1(b) Near-drowning

I close the investigations.



Carol Lee
Coroner
CORONERS COURT OF QUEENSLAND
1 May 2025