



## STATE CORONER'S COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

<b>Inquest:</b>	Into the death of Sione Amanakilelei Harmony Moala'eua
<b>Hearing dates:</b>	27 February 2019
<b>Date of findings:</b>	27 February 2019
<b>Place of findings:</b>	State Coroners Court, Lidcombe
<b>Findings of:</b>	Deputy State Coroner E.Truscott
<b>Catchwords:</b>	Coronial Law-Cause and manner of death-
<b>File number:</b>	2017/00263268
<b>Representation:</b>	Advocate Assisting: Mr T. O'Donnell
<b>Findings:</b>	That Sione Amanakilelei Harmony Moala'eua died on 27 August 2017 at 5/8 Garner Street, St Mary's, of unascertained natural causes.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	

IN THE STATE CORONER'S COURT  
LIDCOMBE  
NSW

SECTION 81 CORONERS ACT 2009

## REASONS FOR DECISION

### Introduction

1. This inquest concerns the death of 21 year old Sione MOALA'EUA, who was found deceased in his unit at 5 of 8 Garner Street St Mary's on Tuesday 29 August 2017.
2. It is the role of the Coroner to investigate and make findings about sudden, violent, suspicious or unnatural deaths. Those findings are to be made in relation to the identity of the person who has died, the date and place of the person's death, the cause of death, and manner (or circumstances) of the person's death. Coroners may also make recommendations in relation to any matter connected with the person's death if they think it appropriate to do so.
3. Given the evidence contained in the brief, there was only brief evidence called from the Officer in Charge of the investigation, and from Forensic Pathologist, Dr Bernard l'Ons. The police have engaged in a lengthy investigation to ensure that the Coroner is sufficiently capable of answering the relevant questions relating to Sione's death.

## BACKGROUND

4. Sione was born in Australia on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1995. He was one of 5 siblings. His family call him Naki. When he was 10 years of age he moved to New Zealand where he completed his schooling. At the age of 18 he returned to live in Australia.
5. Sione had been residing in an apartment in Garner St, St Mary's for about two years. He lived on his own apart from a period of about three months when his older sister Yolanda shared the unit. He was described by family members as a quiet person, who was fairly anti-social and liked to keep to himself. He worked full time at Strandbags in Erskine Park, and was described by his colleagues as a hard worker who always attended work. He was good friends with a couple of his work colleagues.
6. Sione had told his friends at work that he occasionally used drugs, spending about \$300 on cocaine about every three months. Sione also told them that he occasionally smoked cannabis. He spoke very rarely about relationships or having girlfriends.
7. Sione has a very limited medical history and according to police investigations, he never had a Medicare card issued to him. He very rarely sought medical assistance and it appears that he did not have a regular doctor. He does not appear to have been diagnosed with any form of depression, nor was he on any prescription medication. According to his sister-in-law Louise, Sione had been suffering from insomnia and a couple of weeks prior to his death she gave him some over-the-counter children's sleeping medicine to help him sleep.

## LEADING UP TO DEATH

8. On Friday the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, Sione attended work at Strandbags during the day. His friend Fekai LEVI noticed that Sione didn't 'appear to be himself' and was working very slowly.
9. About 12pm on Sunday the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, Sione was picked up from his Garner Street apartment by his sister-in-law Louise, her partner Semisi, (who is Sione;s brother) and their children. They travelled together to Penrith RSL, where they had lunch with some other family and friends and watched a televised boxing match. Louise remembers Sione drinking beer, but believes he could have only had one or two beers at most.

Louise dropped Sione back at his apartment at about 4:30pm and she did not notice anything out of the ordinary. This is the last time, that a witness has seen Sione.

10. According to Sione's mobile phone records, the last time his phone was used was to access Snapchat at approximately 8:27pm that Sunday night. The last text message he received was from Semisi earlier that day before being picked up to go to the RSL.
11. Sione did not attend work on Monday 28 August and at about 1:15pm on Tuesday the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, Louise noticed she had a missed call from Sione's work. When she called them back, they informed her that he hadn't attended work and they couldn't get in contact with him. Louise tried to contact Sione, but was also unsuccessful. She travelled to his residence in Garner Street, meeting Sione's nephew Fatai there, before entering the apartment. Louise had a spare key to Sione's apartment and gave it to Fatai to open the door.
12. Sione's apartment had a screen door and a wooden door, both of which were locked at this time and needed to be opened with the key. Straight away they noticed a very strong smell coming from the apartment. Fatai entered and found Sione lying face up on his bed. He walked closer and noticed blood coming from Sione's nose. He then called out to Louise to call an ambulance. Louise called triple zero, and relayed the information from the operator to Fatai, which involved commencing CPR. Fatai pulled Sione off the bed and onto the floor to begin doing compressions. The Ambulance arrived about 5 or 10 minutes later, and informed Louise and Fatai that Sione was deceased.

#### INVESTIGATION FOLLOWING DEATH

13. Police attended a short time later and established a crime scene. The apartment was searched and a number of items of interest were seized by police as evidence. Though there was blood on Sione's face there were no signs found of 'spatter' or 'cast off' blood that would be consistent with an injury, nor were there any signs of droplets of blood that would indicate Sione had moved after being apparently injured.
14. Police conducted a canvass of the area and talked to a number of neighbouring residents. Monica PAU, the resident of unit 6, directly opposite Sione's apartment, provided a statement. She informed police that on Monday the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, between 10pm and 10:30pm, she heard the sound of a door being slammed. She believed that it was Sione's front door. Monica opened her front door, walked out and looked over the stairwell railing and could see a person wearing a hooded jumper on the landing below making their way towards the exit.

15. Five other residents who live in the same unit complex or nearby provided statements to police. Four of these residents provided evidence that on the Monday night, there was a loud argument and yelling coming from outside the unit complex, most likely between a male and a female. None of them saw the people arguing or where they went.
16. An autopsy was conducted on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2017 by Pathologist Dr Bernard I'ons. Dr I'ons subsequently provided a post mortem report which sets out his examination but he was unable to ascertain the cause of Sione's death. Dr I'ons noted that there were no external injuries. The blood that was on and around Sione's face was a natural result of him having been deceased for a time before being discovered.
17. A sample of Sione's blood was sent to a laboratory for analysis. The results contained in the Toxicology Report indicate an absence of alcohol and drugs. The radiology report completed by Dr James Raleigh, found no acute injury or other significant pathology.

#### IN CONCLUSION

18. The focus of this investigation and inquest has been identifying the cause of Sione's death. If it is natural it could be due to what is called a group of heart diseases referred to as 'channelopathies' which would explain why health young man such as Sione could die suddenly and unexpectedly. If it was not a natural death the only thing which may have caused his death that we know about is drugs. However, there was nothing found in his apartment which would suggest any recent drug use nor is there any evidence that he used drugs while out during the day on the Sunday. The autopsy identified partially digested food in his stomach including chicken. Looking at his telephone records and the fact that Sione did not attend work on Monday morning I am satisfied that Sione died on Sunday night.
19. There is no evidence that Sione has met with foul play. His neighbours reported hearing a commotion but that was on Monday night which is obviously not relevant in relation to Sione's death. There is no evidence that drugs were involved in his death. A young person's sudden and unexplained death is very difficult to understand but I accept that no further investigations can be carried out which will lead us to the cause of Sione's death.

20. My findings are:

**FINDINGS**

***Identity***

The person who died is Sione Amanakilelei Harmony Moala'eua

***Date of death***

He died on 27 August 2017

***Place of Death***

He died in his home at 5/8 Garner Street, St Mary's, NSW 2760

***Cause of death***

The cause of his death has not been ascertained.

***Manner of death***

He died of Natural Causes

Magistrate Truscott  
Deputy State Coroner  
Lidcombe NSW  
27 February 2019