



IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

Court Reference: COR 2021 0279

Related matter: COR 2021 0282¹

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Form 37 Rule 60(1)

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

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|--------------------------------|--|
| Deceased: | Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau |
| Delivered on: | 29 November 2021 |
| Delivered at: | Coroners Court of Victoria, 65 Kavanagh Street, Southbank |
| Hearing dates: | 10 November 2021 |
| Findings of: | Coroner Audrey Jamieson |
| Counsel assisting the Coroner: | Ralph Zeeman, Coroner's Solicitor |
| Representation | No appearances |
| Catchwords | Missing person, Frankston |

¹ The related matter refers to the Inquest into the presumed death of Felicity Ruth Loveday who is presumed to have died with her son, Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau whose suspected death is dealt with in this current Inquest.

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I, AUDREY JAMIESON, Coroner,
having investigated the suspected death of ADRIAN CHRISTIAN VICTOR MENEVEAU
and having held an inquest in relation to this suspected death at Southbank on 10 November 2021:
find that the identity of the person suspected to be deceased was ADRIAN CHRISTIAN VICTOR
MENEVEAU born at Dee Why, New South Wales, Australia on 12 July 1963, aged 56 years,
and that the death occurred between 11 and 14 December 2019
at an unascertained location, Port Phillip Bay, Victoria, Australia

from a cause which remains:

I (a) UNASCERTAINED

in the following summary of circumstances:

On 11 December 2019, Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau and his mother, Felicity Ruth Loveday, set sail from Oliver's Hill Boat Ramp, Frankston onto Port Phillip Bay for an intended 3-day trip and were never seen again. On 15 December 2019, the vessel in which they were sailing, was found in Port Phillip Bay, adrift and partially submerged without any sign of Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau or his mother, Felicity Ruth Loveday.

INTRODUCTION

1. Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau (Mr Meneveau) was unmarried and had no children. He lived in Frankston with his mother Felicity Loveday (Ms Loveday) and his sister, Christina Meneveau (Christina).² Ms Loveday had been suffering from dementia since June 2018.³
2. According to Christina, Mr Meneveau was their 83-year-old mother's 'sole carer' for approximately seven years. Prior to this, he worked as handyman for approximately two years but had previously worked in the 'movie industry' in a role akin to a set builder for many years.⁴

² Christina Meneveau is the Senior Next of Kin (SNOK) of her brother, Mr Meneveau and her mother, Ms Loveday.

³ For the purposes of the Inquest proceedings and with the consent of the SNOK, both Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau and his mother, Felicity Ruth Loveday, have been referred to as Adrian and Felicity respectively for the sake of brevity and for ease of reference.

⁴ Coronial Brief of Evidence [CB], statement of Christina Meneveau.

3. Christina stated that her mother 'practiced meditation for a number of years' and that Mr Meneveau followed their mother in this practice. She estimated that her brother had been practising meditation for about seven years.
4. By Christina's account, her mother had incited 'bad magic' by her practice of meditation and her brother had taken it upon himself to reverse the 'bad magic', as their mother was now unable to do this herself due to her declining health and dementia. Christina recounted that the 'bad magic' was previously dispelled by a trip to the Dead Sea and the only way to 'put' the 'bad magic' 'to sleep' was 'to be out on the salt water'.

BACKGROUND CIRCUMSTANCES

5. Mr Meneveau had a history of mental health concerns and alcohol dependence. Dr Sunil Singh of the Bronberg Plaza Medical Centre was his general practitioner (GP) between 2013 and 2018 while he lived in Queensland and according to his medical records held by Queensland Health, Mr Meneveau had been admitted to a facility on several occasions 'with psychotic symptoms' and presented regularly with symptoms related to acute alcohol withdrawal.
6. A long-standing friend, Arthur Hoadley, stated that Mr Meneveau had been raised in 'some sect in Sydney' but he was not sure what that entailed. According to Mr Hoadley, Mr Meneveau was always jovial and was referred to as the 'Nutty Professor' in their circle of friends. In later years he became completely 'nuts' and would 'go on strange diets', 'make himself toxic' and believed that he 'was the chosen one, the reborn Christ'. Although gifted in some ways including being 'very smart', Mr Hoadley believed that his friend 'was off with the fairies a lot of the time' and had decided that after his mother's passing, he 'was going to live off the grid' for fear of not being able to support himself. Part of his plan was 'to get locked up in a hospital so he could justify a pension'.
7. In Victoria, Mr Meneveau's usual GP, since 2018, was Dr Ajisa Sabanovic of the Beach Street Family Medicine Clinic in Frankston who stated that he had a medical history which included Diabetes Mellitus Type 2, Hypertension, Depression and Anxiety. In July 2018 Dr Sabanovic completed a medical report for VicRoads (Department of Transport) certifying that Mr Meneveau met the national medical standards to hold a licence to drive a motor vehicle and to operate a vessel.

The Report of the Disappearance to the Authorities

8. The investigation into the disappearance and suspected death of Mr Meneveau and his mother was sparked by a report by his sister, Christina, to the Victoria Police, when she was unable to make contact with her brother over a period of approximately two days, while he and their mother were out together ‘on the salt water’ of Port Phillip Bay.
9. Having been alerted to the disappearance of Mr Meneveau and his mother at sea, the Frankston Police enjoined the assistance of various governmental and non-governmental agencies with the necessary expertise to launch and conduct the search and rescue operation.

INVESTIGATION AND SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

10. This Finding is based on the totality of the material produced by the coronial investigation into Mr Meneveau’s and Felicity Loveday’s suspected deaths. That is, the investigation and brief of evidence compiled by Detective Leading Senior (DLSC) Constable Christopher Obst from the Marine Investigation Unit of the Victoria Police and his evidence at the Inquest.
11. The brief will remain on the coronial file, together with the Inquest transcript.⁵ In writing this Finding, I do not purport to summarise all the material and evidence but will refer to it only in such detail as is warranted by its forensic significance and in the interests of narrative clarity.

PURPOSE OF A CORONIAL INVESTIGATION

12. The purpose of a coronial investigation of a *reportable death*⁶ is to ascertain, if possible, the identity of the deceased person, the cause of death and the circumstances in which death occurred.⁷ For coronial purposes, *death* includes suspected death.⁸
13. The *cause* of death refers to the *medical* cause of death, incorporating where possible the *mode* or *mechanism* of death. For coronial purposes, the *circumstances* in which death occurred refers to the context or background and surrounding circumstances but is confined to

⁵ From the commencement of the *Coroners Act 2008* (the Act), that is 1 November 2009, access to documents held by the Coroners Court of Victoria is governed by section 115 of the Act. Unless otherwise stipulated, all references to legislation that follow are to provisions of the Act.

⁶ The term is exhaustively defined in section 4 of the *Coroners Act 2008* [the Act]. Apart from a jurisdictional nexus with the State of Victoria a reportable death includes deaths that appear to have been unexpected, unnatural or violent or to have resulted, directly or indirectly, from an accident or injury; and, deaths that occur during or following a medical procedure where the death is or may be causally related to the medical procedure and a registered medical practitioner would not, immediately before the procedure, have reasonably expected the death (section 4(2)(a) and (b) of the Act).

⁷ Section 67(1).

⁸ See the definition of “death” in section 3 of the Act.

those circumstances sufficiently proximate and causally relevant to the death, and not all those circumstances which might form part of a narrative culminating in death.⁹

14. The broader purpose of any coronial investigations is to contribute to the reduction of the number of preventable deaths through the findings of the investigation and the making of recommendations by coroners, generally referred to as the *prevention* role.¹⁰ Coroners are empowered to report to the Attorney-General in relation to a death; to comment on any matter connected with the death they have investigated, including matters of public health or safety and the administration of justice; and to make recommendations to any Minister or public statutory authority on any matter connected with the death, including public health or safety or the administration of justice.¹¹ These are effectively the vehicles by which the coroner's prevention role can be advanced.¹²
15. It is important to emphasise that coroners are not empowered to determine the civil or criminal liability arising from the investigation of a reportable death and are specifically prohibited from including in a finding or comment any statement that a person is, or may be, guilty of an offence.¹³

THE FOCUS OF THE CORONIAL INVESTIGATION AND INQUEST

16. On 13 January 2021, DLSC Obst requested a coronial investigation into the suspected deaths of Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau and his mother, Felicity Ruth Loveday. In support of his request, DLSC Obst submitted a summary of the circumstances of the disappearance and the suspected deaths of Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau and Felicity Ruth Loveday.
17. On 15 February 2021, having considered the request for a coronial investigation, I Directed DLSC Obst to prepare a Coronal Brief of Evidence for my consideration.
18. The coronial investigation of a suspected death differs significantly from most other coronial investigations which commence with the discovery of a deceased person's body or remains. The focus in those cases is on identification of the body or remains, a forensic pathologist's

⁹ This is the effect of the authorities – see for example *Harmsworth v The State Coroner* [1989] VR 989; *Clancy v West* (Unreported 17/08/1994, Supreme Court of Victoria, Harper J.)

¹⁰ The 'prevention' role is now explicitly articulated in the Preamble and purposes of the Act, compared with the *Coroners Act 1985* where this role was generally accepted as 'implicit'.

¹¹ See sections 72(1), 67(3) and 72(2) regarding reports, comments and recommendations respectively.

¹² See also sections 73(1) and 72(5) which requires publication of coronial findings, comments and recommendations and responses respectively; section 72(3) and (4) which oblige the recipient of a coronial recommendation to respond within three months, specifying a statement of action which has or will be taken in relation to the recommendation.

¹³ Section 69(1). However, a coroner may include a statement relating to a notification to the Director of Public Prosecutions if they believe an indictable offence may have been committed in connection with the death. See sections 69(2) and 49(1).

examination and advice to the coroner about the medical cause of death and the circumstances in which the death occurred.

19. Absent a body or remains, the coronial investigation focuses on the last sighting of the person who is suspected to be deceased; any subsequent contact with family or the authorities; and evidence of proof of life since. In such cases, the coronial investigation is essentially an exercise in proof of death through the absence of evidence that a person has been alive or active via searches and a series of checks of records held by various authorities and databases.
20. There were four phases in the investigation of Mr Meneveau's and Ms Loveday's disappearance and presumed deaths – the initial investigation and search in Port Phillip Bay, a second search around where Mr Meneveau's boat was found, partially submerged, an investigation of Mr Meneveau's vehicle, the vessel and insurance policy claims and/or payouts and final proof of life checks by DSC Bree Blair of the Missing Persons Squad (MPS).

THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE DISAPPEARANCE AND THE ACQUISITION OF THE FIRST VESSEL

21. Mr Meneveau was a follower of the spiritual teachings of the spiritual leader, Ferdi Rossi and as such, he adhered to the Six Yogas of Naropa, a Buddhist mystic. These yogas are a set of advanced tantric practices for meditation. Mr Meneveau's mother was the one-time secretary of Ferdi Rossi who passed some 16 years earlier and was succeeded by James Walter.
22. On 11 November 2019, Mr Meneveau sent an almost cryptic email to James Walter in which he described how he 'was cut away from his normal assemblage by snakes' and how he was trying to 'detach' himself from the 'red world'. According to Mr Meneveau, his 'true spiriting' was being blocked by 'a lot of naughty abuse of magic'. He stated further that his mother who was 'now experiencing her childhood and is no longer in logic' was also affected and that he was working to 'detach her pantry in Egypt'. The email ended with Mr Meneveau offering his mother's ceremonial sword to James Walter.
23. On 20 November 2019, responding to an advertisement on the Gumtree Website, Mr Meneveau enquired about purchasing a vessel. On 21 November 2019, after making further enquiries with the owner, he drove to Bahgallah, a farming town in country Victoria, close to the border with South Australia, departing from Frankston at approximately 9 pm in his vehicle, a white Ford Courier utility vehicle with registration number 1NP 9GP. Prior to leaving, Mr Meneveau drafted a document which purported to be a Will, bequeathing his

estate to his sister. He also handed a file to Christina which contained details of his banking credentials and passwords. According to Christina, she understood that her brother went to purchase a vessel and that he would then make his way to Adelaide, South Australia and that he would stay there for about one month. The purpose of the journey to Adelaide was to test the vessel's suitability to dispel the 'bad magic'.

24. On 22 November 2019, at approximately 8.00 am, Mr Meneveau arrived at the seller's residence in Bahgallah, inspected the vessel and tested the outboard motor. Satisfied with the vessel, Mr Meneveau concluded the sale for the vessel with registration number NY 494 and its trailer with registration number W31611 and left the seller's residence at approximately 9.00 am after completing the transfer of ownership documents. According to DLSC Obst, the transfer of ownership documents were not lodged with VicRoads.
25. At 10.59 am, a Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) Safe-T-Cam (STC) detected Mr Meneveau's vehicle in Keith, South Australia. At 11.58 am his mobile phone data records indicated that he was in Yumali, South Australia which indicated his onward journey towards Adelaide. At 1.08 pm, an STC of the DPTI detected Mr Meneveau's vehicle at Crafers West, South Australia which is approximately 17 km from the Adelaide CBD. This was the last indication that Mr Meneveau was travelling in the direction of Adelaide.
26. At 8.28 pm an STC of the DPTI detected Mr Menenveau's in Keith. South Australia, due East. By 8.58 pm another STC detected his vehicle in Bordertown, South Australia. It is not clear from the STC images whether Mr Meneveau was towing the vessel with registration number NY 494.
27. On 23 November 2019 at 2.24 am, data information from Mr Meneveau's mobile phone indicated that he was in the vicinity of Nhill, Victoria and at 7.03 am his vehicle was detected by a CityLink toll gantry point at the Burnley Tunnel, Melbourne, reaching the toll gantry point at Toorak Road by 7.04 am. At this juncture the vessel and trailer, bought in Bahgallah, were not attached to his vehicle. To date, neither the vessel nor the trailer have been traced. According to DLSC Obst, the Victoria Police Marine Investigation Unit has placed a 'whereabout alert' (sic) on the vessel and trailer in the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database.
28. Data information from Mr Meneveau's phone indicated that he arrived at his home, 44 Brentwood Crescent, Frankston at approximately 7.30 am.

THE ACQUISITION OF THE SECOND VESSEL AND PREPARATION FOR THE VOYAGE

29. On 2 December 2019, Mr Meneveau contacted his real estate agent and advised that he was not going to renew his lease for the next leasing period which would have begun after February 2020, as his mother's health had deteriorated, and she was not able to cope with the stairs leading to the front door any longer. According to the real estate agent's records, Mr Meneveau's rent had been paid in advance to the end of the lease period.
30. On 3 December 2019, responding to an advertisement on the Ebay Website, Mr Meneveau enquired about purchasing another vessel.
31. On 4 December 2019, Mr Meneveau purchased 20 x 20 kg bags of swimming pool salt. The 400 kg of swimming pool salt was delivered to his home the next day. According to Christina, Mr Meneveau then asked her to purchase an inflatable children's swimming pool as well 20 boxes of bicarbonate of soda. Christina stated further that even though she did not observe her brother doing anything with the swimming pool, the salt and the bicarbonate of soda, he had told her that he was thinking of putting their mother into the pool, but the weather conditions were too cold for Ms Loveday to be put into the pool.
32. On 4 December 2019, Mr Meneveau went to view the vessel, located in Clayton South. The seller informed him that the vessel's outboard engine had a faulty gasket and was losing water. Mr Meneveau told the seller that the faulty gasket was not an issue because he was a mechanic and could fix it. The sale was concluded for the vessel with registration number ER 422 after which Mr Meneveau completed the VicRoads transfer of ownership documents using Christina's details, having her Victorian Driver Licence with him at the time. He also forged her signature on the documents.
33. On 6 December 2019, Mr Meneveau sent his sister to purchase three 44-gallon drums of methanol.¹⁴ When she was told that the supplier only had 480 litres available, Christine phoned her brother and by his direction, confirmed that she would take what could be supplied at the time. According to Christina, after she returned with the methanol, her brother drove to the Oliver's Hill Boat Ramp where he opened the 44-gallon drums so that the fumes could 'work on reversing the black magic'.¹⁵
34. On 9 December 2019, after registering the vessel in her own name with VicRoads, Christina contacted the insurer, YOUI, to insure the vessel with registration number ER 422. This too,

¹⁴ Methanol is an alcohol commonly used for performance or racing engines. 44 Gallons equates to 166.5 litres.

¹⁵ Christina was told that the seller only had 2 x 200-litre drums and 1 x 180-litre drum available.

was done in her name. Initially, prompted to answer the insurer's questions about the vessel by Mr Meneveau, Christina handed the phone to her brother.¹⁶

35. The insurer advised him that, over and above the default excess payment of \$720.00, an additional \$1000.00 excess payment would be due and payable in the event of a claim lodged within 90 days of the inception of the policy. Upon hearing this, Mr Meneveau enquired whether this additional excess amount would apply even if the boat 'capsizes' or 'sinks' and cannot be recovered.
36. When the insurer advised Mr Meneveau further that in the event of a claim, the insured would receive either the insured value or the market value at the time of the claim, whichever amount was the lesser, he enquired what the position would be 'If the boat disappears underwater, how do you measure it?' (sic)
37. After seeking advice from the YOUI management team in respect of Mr Meneveau's concerns about the vessel sinking, the insurer offered him an opportunity to be listed as an authorised claimant on the insurance policy. Mr Meneveau declined the offer.
38. Mr Meneveau then told his sister that 'he had planned a trip for himself and Mum' and that he wanted to 'leave on Tuesday the 10th of December 2019' and be away 'for 2 or 3 days'.
39. On 10 December 2019 at approximately 9 am, Mr Meneveau, accompanied by his mother and sister made their way to Oliver's Hill Boat Ramp at Frankston. Once there, Mr Meneveau launched the vessel and set sail on the bay, taking the vessel 'for a little spin', before making his way back to the pier where his mother and sister were waiting. According to Christina, Mr Meneveau told her that he returned due to the unfavourable weather conditions.
40. On 11 December 2019 at approximately 6.30 am Mr Meneveau made his way back to the Oliver's Hill Boat Ramp with his mother and sister, towing the vessel. At 6.32 am, the Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) captured his vehicle driving along the Nepean Highway, Frankston. When they arrived, Mr Meneveau launched the vessel and berthed it at the pier. A passer-by, Hugo Steinbergs, observed him loading what appeared to be supplies into the vessel as well as 'helping a very elderly out of his 4wd tray ute into a wheelchair' (sic) and 'wheeling the old woman to the boat'. Mr Steinbergs also noticed that Mr Meneveau's utility vehicle was laden with 'three 44-gallon drums of hazardous/poisonous material' and thought that what he was observing 'was pretty odd'. (sic).

¹⁶ The call transcripts were reviewed as part of my Coronial Investigation.

41. According to Christina, she assisted her brother 'to get Mum into the boat' whereafter she put the 'wheelchair back into the ute' and then photographed her mother and brother in the vessel. Christina stated that Mr Meneveau had packed food for several days, extra clothing and some mats for them to lie down on as well as Vodka and told his sister that the alcohol helped him 'to get into the state of mind' needed to work 'with energies and intent'. She stated further that her brother was 'constantly in communication with his guides and higher self' and was 'very obedient to what he was being told'.
42. Both Mr Meneveau and his mother wore life jackets and although Christina did not wait to see her mother and brother set sail because she was due at work, Mr Meneveau told his sister that he planned to sail to an area between Safety Beach and Sorrento because that area of Port Phillip Bay offered shelter. He pointed the area out on a map.
43. Before Christina left the Oliver's Hill Boat Ramp, Mr Meneveau told her that he would 'keep contact by SMS' and let her know when they were ready to be collected. Even though the trip was to be for only '2 or 3 days', he was not sure when they would be back. Christina was not too concerned because, to her, the timeframe Mr Meneveau had given her 'could mean any amount of time'.
44. At approximately 7.00 am, CCTV footage from a location in the vicinity of the Oliver's Hill Boat Ramp captured the image of a vessel, believed to be that of Mr Meneveau, charting its course due South on Port Phillip Bay.
45. At 5.15 pm Mr Meneveau sent his sister a text message assuring her that all was well and that she had no cause for concern. At 8:55 pm, Christina responded to her brother's message, simply saying: 'Good'.
46. On 12 December 2019, at 10.59 pm, having had no contact with her brother and mother during the day, Christina sent a message to Mr Meneveau's phone to enquire about their wellbeing. He did not respond.
47. On 13 December 2019, after she had not heard from Mr Meneveau, Christina tried to phone her brother during the course of the day. His phone 'went straight to voicemail'. At 6.23 pm, she tried his number for a second time and again, 'it went straight to voicemail'.
48. On 14 December 2019, at 6.42 am and again at 10.17 am, Christina tried to phone her brother and on both occasions, she was not able to make contact with Mr Meneveau. She then made a missing person's report to the Victoria Police.

FIRST PHASE OF THE INVESTIGATION –

Day one: 14 December 2019

49. On 14 December 2019 at approximately 11.30 am, Christina reported her brother and mother missing. In response to her report, Victoria Police attended at their residence, 44 Brentwood Crescent, Frankston and began the investigation by conducting a search of their home and Mr Meneveau's bedroom and there the police discovered his wallet on a bedside table containing the following:
 - i. \$ 605.00 in cash;
 - ii. A Driver Licence card in the name of Adrian Meneveau;
 - iii. A Medicare card in the name of Adrian Meneveau; and
 - iv. A Suncorp debit card in the name of Adrian Meneveau;
50. Also on the bedside table, next to Mr Meneveau's wallet, the police discovered the following:
 - i. A second Suncorp card in the name of Felicity Loveday; and
 - ii. A second Medicare card in the name of Felicity Loveday.
51. Mr Meneveau's Asus Laptop computer was found and seized together with his vehicle and the watercraft trailer, used to transport the vessel to the Oliver's Hill Boat Ramp. The items were submitted for forensic examination.
52. Detective Senior Constable (DSC) Madeleine McDonald of the Marine Investigation Unit took custody of the items and Mr Meneveau's vehicle and the watercraft trailer was transported to a holding facility at Somerville Towing's premises, Somerville.

Marine Search and Rescue Operation

53. The marine search and rescue operation was led by Marine Co-ordinator, Sergeant Fiona Robinson of the Water Police Squad, who received a report from the Frankston Police of two missing persons at approximately 11.37 am. According to Sergeant Robinson, she gathered her team stationed at the Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) at approximately 12.10 pm and following National Search and Rescue Arrangements, she handled the complaint as a 'Distress incident'.
54. Having ascertained the date on which Mr Meneveau had set sail from Frankston, Sergeant Robinson directed a team member to conduct a Search and Rescue Model and Response System (SARMAP) prediction of the drift of objects in the ocean based on the prevailing ocean currents, the tides and the wind between 11 December 2019 and 14 December 2019. In

addition, Sergeant Robinson scrutinised the RCC monitors to ascertain what the prevailing weather conditions were at the approximate time of Mr Meneveau's departure as indicated by Christina. Sergeant Robinson determined that the wind direction varied from a Southerly to Westerly direction and thereafter to a South, South Westerly direction at a rate of 14 to 19 knots.

55. Armed with this information, Sergeant Robinson instructed her search and rescue team including Water Police vessels, Volunteer Marine Rescue vessels, a police helicopter and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) to commence the search, deploying officers to the following locations:
- i. Marine 407 directed to Safety Beach and to head in a Southerly direction'
 - ii. Marine 444 directed to Portsea, Sorrento, Queenscliff, St Leonards and thereafter directed North.
 - iii. Coast Guard vessel 06 to Safety Beach to liaise with Marine 407 and then to sail along the coast to Dromana and into South Channel;
 - iv. Coast Guard vessel 07 to sail from Patterson River, South along the coast to Mornington;
 - v. Southern Peninsula Rescue Squad to Martin Cove; and
 - vi. The Police Airwing 33 directed to perform a general sweep of the Eastern side of Port Phillip Bay from Brighton to Sorrento.
56. By 4.00 pm, Sergeant Robinson's search and rescue operation did not yield any find of Mr Meneveau and his mother and no further developments transpired overnight.

Day two: 15 December 2019

57. On 15 December 2019, at 6.35 am, a vessel was spotted, adrift in a vertical position but almost fully submerged, by fishermen off Rickett's Point, Port Phillip Bay. When they alerted the police, they were advised to remain with the vessel and to try to secure it. Using towing rope, the fishermen secured the vessel by tying their rope to a rope already attached to the submerged vessel.
58. At approximately 7.45 am, the police arrived and took custody of the vessel from the fishermen. According to Leading Senior Constable (LSC) Jason St Clair of the Water Police Squad, Williamstown, aided by his colleague, Senior Constable (SC) Bates, they inspected the submerged vessel and having determined that there was no one in the vessel, they towed the vessel to the marina at the Sandringham Yacht Club.

59. At approximately 9.20 am, LSC St Clair and SC Bates docked the vessel alongside the boat ramp for fear of it sinking if it were berthed at the jetty. Upon further inspection, they found that the ignition switch of vessel with registration number ER 422 was in the “off” position, the throttle control was in the neutral position and the engine was tilted-up, indicating that the vessel was not being operated when it sank. They also noted that the vessel’s drain plugs, referred to as ‘bungs’, were securely in place.
60. The vessel was then towed to the Williamstown Police Complex where it was secured for the purpose of the impending forensic investigation. At this juncture, in the vessel, the police discovered two personal floatation devices (PFD), colloquially known as life jackets which visually matched those worn by Mr Meneveau and his mother as indicated by the photographs taken by Christina immediately before her brother had set sail. On one PFD the police identified what appeared to be blood. A Samsung mobile phone was also discovered which was confirmed to have belonged to Mr Meneveau.
61. After the vessel was discovered, submerged and without anyone on board, Sergeant Robinson conducted another SARMAP search to ascertain the direction of the drift of persons ‘if they had fallen overboard’. Once again, armed with the information pertaining to the prevailing weather, ocean currents and the tides, at approximately 10 am, she deployed search and rescue personnel to the following areas:
- i. Coast Guard 02 to trace the coastline approximately 2 km to the West from Red Bluff due North to Sandridge;
 - ii. Coast Guard 01 to search the area from the Western edge of the shipping channel due East to 2 km from the shoreline and from Black Rock due North to Sandridge;
 - iii. Coast Guard 07 to search the coastline from Black Rock due South to Ricketts Point; and
 - iv. PolAir 35, from the Police Airwing, to do an overall aerial search of the North Eastern section of Port Phillip Bay from Mordialloc, due West to south of Point Cook and the due North East to Williamstown.
62. These further searches also did not yield any trace of Mr Meneveau or his mother.
63. Sergeant Robinson then obtained an opinion from Dr Paul Luckin on the hypothesis that Mr Meneveau and his mother entered the water at 6.30 am on 15 December 2019. Based on the facts relating to Mr Meneveau and his mother as stated by Christina and including their ages

and medical histories, amongst others, Dr Luckin opined that Mr Meneveau could survive for six to seven-and-a-half hours and his mother could only survive for one to two hours.¹⁷

64. Sergeant Robinson also ascertained that the Port Phillip Council had been grading the beach sand between Sandridge and Elwood for a period of four days prior to the second day of the search and rescue operation which, as indicated by the evidence, was between 11-15 December 2019. Nothing related to Mr Meneveau or his mother was found by the Council employees.
65. Between 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm, Sergeant Robinson deployed further search and rescue teams to conduct further shoreline searches from:
 - i. Frankston to Mount Martha; and
 - ii. Between Brighton and Aspendale.

66. Again, this search did not produce any trace of Mr Meneveau or his mother.

Days three and four: 16-17 December 2019

67. According to Sergeant Robinson she coordinated further searches, without results, in the days following the discovery of the vessel based on information relating to Mr Meneveau's mobile phone records. This search was extended to the Port Phillip Bay coastline in the vicinity of Indented Heads, Portarlington, St Leonards and on and around Mud Island.

SECOND PHASE OF THE INVESTIGATION – FORENSIC INVESTIGATION

68. On 17 December 2019 at 10.45am, Senior Constable (SC) Kristopher Hall of the Major Crime Scene Unit (MCSU) of the Victoria Police Forensic Services Centre (VPFSC), examined Mr Meneveau's Ford Courier utility vehicle with registration 1NP 9GP at the premises of Somerville Towing. According to SC Hall, the vehicle was in a fair condition with a uniform layer of dust indicating that it had not been disturbed since it was impounded. On the tray of the vehicle, he found three blue- coloured metal drums, labelled 'Methanol' all of which containing varying amounts of clear liquid.
69. During his examination of the vehicle, he collected the following exhibits, amongst others:
 - i. One Navman GPS device attached to the inside of the windscreen;
 - ii. Tissue paper in the glove box which appeared to blood-stained;

¹⁷ Dr Luckin is a medical doctor on the directing staff of the National Police Search and Rescue Managers Course and teaches Search and Rescue at State/Territory as well as at National level. He is a Member of the Order of Australia for his significant service through emergency medicine and as an authority on survivability in search and rescue operations.

- iii. A swab of what appeared to be a stain of blood on interior of passenger-side door; and
 - iv. Handwritten notes containing, *inter alia*, what appeared to be GPS coordinates.
70. Further investigation of the handwritten notes indicated references to the purchase of the first vessel and the Garden Island Boat Ramp in Port Adelaide, South Australia.
71. At 3.30 pm, SC Hall conducted an investigation on Mr Meneveau's vessel, a blue Savage Electra with registration number ER 422 stowed in the MCSU garage at the VPFSC and collected the following exhibits from the cabin of the vessel:
- i. One yellow "Marlin" life jacket which appeared to have a blood stain;
 - ii. One red-handled paring knife;
 - iii. One black-handled filleting knife;
 - iv. One pair of silver-coloured spectacles; and
 - v. One roll of 'Bear cloth tape.
72. On 18 December 2019, SC Hall received one life jacket which was found when the vessel was recovered from the ocean and taken to the Sandringham Yacht Club, from DSC McDonald who also had the other items collected from the search and rescue operation in her safe custody including Mr Meneveau's wallet and his Asus Laptop computer.
73. On 27 December 2019, SC Hall handed the exhibits to the Liaison Officer at the Forensic Exhibit Management Unit, VPFSC. Subsequent forensic investigation of the exhibits collected by SC Hall identified that the sample of blood from the passenger-side door of the Ford Courier utility vehicle matched Mr Meneveau's DNA. However, with further forensic testing, human blood was not identified on the life jackets.

The Laptop Computer

74. The Victoria Police E-crime Squad conducted a forensic examination of Mr Meneveau's Asus Laptop computer which revealed the following:
- i. From 5 October 2019 onwards, Mr Meneveau used his laptop computer to advertise camping gear which indicated that, in the period that followed but prior to his departure to Bahgallah and Adelaide, Mr Meneveau had sold all or most of his camping gear which he accumulated over time in preparation to 'live off the grid' in future.

- ii. On 4 December 2019, Mr Meneveau conducted a search for 'Sea Burial' and accessed the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment website;
 - iii. Between 9 – 10 December 2019, Mr Meneveau conducted several searches in relation to ocean currents, the prevailing weather at 'Frankston and Melbourne Bay'; and
 - iv. Between 9 -10 December 2019, Mr Meneveau accessed several Google maps of Port Phillip Bay and Bass Strait off the Mornington Peninsula
75. These searches were the last recorded activities on Mr Meneveau's computer prior to his setting sail from Frankston on 11 December 2019.

THIRD PHASE OF THE INVESTIGATION- RECOVERY OPERATIONS

Insurance Claim

76. Having lodged a claim in respect of the damages to vessel with the insurer, YOUI, Christina was interviewed by the insurer and confirmed that the purchase price was less than the insured value.
77. On 15 January 2020, the claim was settled in accordance with the prescripts of the policy she held.

Examination of the vessel

78. DLSC Obst's investigation included a synopsis of the weather conditions over Port Phillip Bay for the period 11-15 December 2019 which he obtained from the records held by the Bureau of Meteorology. According to the records the wind speed range was between 16.9 -27 knots with gusts of wind ranging between 22 and 33 knots.
79. On 21 January 2020 Mr Meneveau's vessel with registration number ER 422 was examined by Martin Jaggs of Maritime Safety Victoria. Mr Jaggs found the vessel intact but with a 'very small hole which allowed 33 litres of water per hour to enter the hull when there was a head (or water depth) of 50 mm of water on the deck'. Despite this defect, Mr Jaggs found that the vessel could maintain 'sufficient freeboard to prevent water from shipping into the vessel' and provided that 'there was no water resting on the deck, it did not take water into the hull space'.
80. Mr Jaggs stated that buoyancy was also provided by the under-hull space' which remained intact' and therefore in 'reasonably calm seas the vessel could be operated safely'.
81. Mr Jaggs' conclusions were twofold. Either:

- i. The vessel was adrift for some time, then encountered ‘seas sufficiently rough and/or sufficient rain for it to ship water onto the deck, which eventually capsized the vessel due to lost buoyancy’; or
 - ii. The vessel lost buoyancy due to water ingress via the very small hole in the deck allowing water to enter the below deck buoyancy chamber’ which resulted in the vessel sinking.
82. Whatever the position was, the evidence indicates that the vessel ultimately took water and sank which resulted in the search and rescue operation to find Mr Meneveau and his mother and failing which, to recover their bodies. To date, neither Mr Meneveau’s body nor his mother’s body have been recovered.

FOURTH PHASE OF THE INVESTIGATION--MISSING PERSONS SQUAD

83. On 23 January 2020, DSC Bree Blair of the Victoria Police Missing Persons Squad (MPS) commenced her investigation into the disappearance of Mr Meneveau and his mother. The investigation included an examination the following, *inter alia*:
- i. Witness statements;
 - ii. Photographs;
 - iii. Mr Meneveau’s mobile phone data analysis;
 - iv. Mr Meneveau’s Asus Laptop computer data analysis;
 - v. Mr Meneveau’s medical records;
 - vi. Mr Meneveau’s banking credentials;
 - vii. Mr Meneveau’s Insurance Policy credentials including transcripts of phone calls to insurers; and
 - viii. Miscellaneous information produced DLSC Obst’s investigation thus far.
84. In addition, on 5 February 2020, in the hope of securing CCTV footage or images of Mr Meneveau, DSC Blair sought the assistance of the Water Operations Unit of the South Australia Police in light of the GPS coordinates referenced on the notes found in Mr Meneveau’s vehicle which correlated to the Garden Island Boat Ramp in Port Adelaide, South Australia. Neither Mr Meneveau nor the first vessel with registration number NY 494 which he bought in Bahgallah, Victoria, were identified on any CCTV footage or images.
85. A further investigation of vessels registered in South Australia during the period 22 November 2019 to 20 December 2019 did not identify vessel NY 494.

86. On 13 February 2020, DSC Blair executed a search warrant on the banking institution, Suncorp, to obtain all Mr Meneveau's banking records, his mother's banking records, and his sister's banking records. Having scrutinised all the bank records, DSC Blair did not identify any unusual activity in their banking accounts. In particular, no transactions were recorded in South Australia.
87. DSC Blair conducted further proof of life checks which included the following:
- i. Life Insurance Policies and Claims checks;
 - ii. Change of name checks in all states and territories in Australia;
 - iii. Bank and financial institution application checks;
 - iv. Telecommunications checks; and
 - v. Interstate and international travel checks with Border Force and Immigration;
88. The Australian Federal Police placed an 'alert' notice on Mr Meneveau at all international points of departure.
89. By 24 August 2021, upon the expiration of the international point of departure notice, there has been no attempt by Mr Meneveau or Ms Loveday to leave Australia.¹⁸
90. Having conducted a full investigation, replete with significant proof of life checks, DCS Blair concluded that:
- i. Mr Meneveau arranged his affairs so that his sister, Christina would not be financially burdened. He achieved this by paying their rent in advance, arranging short term insurance for the vessel and by providing her with his bank account credentials and his passwords;
 - ii. Mr Meneveau took his mother out on the bay to rid her body of bad spirits;
 - iii. Mr Meneveau's vessel was not suitable to be out on the bay for several days;
 - iv. The disappearance of Mr Meneveau and his mother resulted from misadventure; and
 - v. Both Mr Meneveau and his mother are deceased.

¹⁸ The inception of my investigation, on 15 February 2021, into the suspected deaths of Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau and his mother, Felicity Ruth Loveday precedes this date. To date, the Department of Immigration records do not indicate that Mr Meneveau or Ms Loveday have left Australia.

THE INQUEST

91. The only witness called at Inquest was the Coroner's Investigator, DLSC Christopher Obst who provided an overview of the investigation and to answer any questions that I or the family might have.
92. In summary, DLSC Obst's *viva voce* evidence dealt with following aspects:
- i. He prepared the Coronial Brief of Evidence after leading the investigation into the disappearance and suspected deaths of Mr Meneveau and his mother, Felicity Ruth Loveday;
 - ii. Having familiarised himself with the facts, circumstances and history of Mr Meneveau's disappearance, DLSC Obst consulted with and briefed all the witness before obtaining the statements and evidence required by my investigation into the disappearance and suspected deaths of Mr Meneveau and his mother, Felicity Ruth Loveday;
 - iii. After the Victoria Police seized Mr Meneveau's Asus Laptop computer and his Ford Utility vehicle, with registration number 1NP 9GP, DLSC Obst guided the forensic investigation on the vehicle and the Asus Laptop computer;
 - iv. DLSC Obst discovered that Mr Meneveau had dissipated all or most of his camping gear amassed for 'living off the grid' in the period leading to his disappearance;
 - v. After the vessel, with registration number ER 422, was recovered from the ocean, DLSC Obst guided the forensic investigation on the vessel itself and the life jackets recovered therefrom;
 - vi. At the end of the police investigation, he consulted with and briefed DSC Blair who did the final proof of life checks;
 - vii. DLSC Obst has consulted with Christina Meneveau who believes that her brother and mother who suffered dementia and was disabled, are no longer alive having disappeared after they set sail from Frankston on 11 December 2019, especially after the vessel was recovered and their bodies have not been recovered.
93. In all the circumstances, DLSC Obst believes that Mr Meneveau is deceased.

CONCLUSIONS/FINDINGS

94. The standard of proof for coronial findings or facts is the civil standard of proof on the balance of probabilities, with the *Briginshaw* gloss or explication.¹⁹
95. It is self-evident that a Finding that a person whose remains have not been found is deceased is a serious matter with significant legal consequences that is not made lightly and requires me to reach a comfortable level of satisfaction as to facts based on the evidence.

FINDINGS

96. Having applied the applicable standard to the available evidence, I make the following Findings pursuant to section 67 of the *Coroners Act 2008 (Vic)*:
- a. Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau, born on 12 July 1963, late of Frankston, Victoria, is now deceased.
 - b. Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau was last seen by his sister, Christina Meneveau on 11 December 2019 and has not been seen or heard from again by any member of his family or anyone who provided a statement for the coronial brief which includes close friends and work colleagues.
 - c. No credible sightings have been made of Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau since the morning of 11 December 2019.
 - d. Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau has not accessed his bank accounts or the bank accounts of his mother, Felicity Ruth Loveday.
 - e. Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau has not left the country using a passport issued in his own name or accessed public medical care since his disappearance.
 - f. Despite Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau never communicating suicidal or homicidal intent, he had a history of mental health concerns including depression, anxiety and psychosis.
 - g. It is also noteworthy that Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau put a number of his personal affairs 'in order' prior to undertaking his planned sea voyage. These

¹⁹ *Briginshaw v Briginshaw* (1938) 60 C.L.R. 336 esp at 362-363. "The seriousness of an allegation made, the inherent unlikelihood of an occurrence of a given description, or the gravity of the consequences flowing from a particular finding, are considerations which must affect the answer to the question whether the issues had been proved to the reasonable satisfaction of the tribunal. In such matters "reasonable satisfaction" should not be produced by inexact proofs, indefinite testimony, or indirect inferences..."

included drafting a document which purported to be a Will, making advance payments on his rent and disclosing his banking credentials and passwords to his sister, Christina.

- h. The weight of available evidence supports a Finding that Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau and his mother, Felicity Loveday, most likely died between 11 and 14 December 2019 but that evidence does not enable me to make more specific Findings as to the date or time or death.
 - i. The weight of available evidence supports a Finding that Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau died in the vicinity of Port Phillip Bay but that evidence does not enable me to make a more specific Finding as to the place of death.
 - j. The available evidence does not enable me to make a Finding as to the cause of Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau's death.
 - k. There is insufficient evidence to support a Finding that Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau intentionally ended his own life or the life of his mother, Felicity Ruth Loveday but equally, the possibility cannot sensibly be excluded as the evidence indicates that the personal floatation devices which Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau and Felicity Ruth Loveday were seen to be wearing when they departed from Frankston on 11 December 2019, were found in the wreckage of the vessel in which they had set sail.
 - l. There is insufficient evidence to support a Finding that Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau removed his own personal floatation device, or the personal floatation device worn by Felicity Ruth Loveday. However, the evidence indicates that Felicity Ruth Loveday may not have been able to remove her own personal floatation device because of her physical limitations due to her ill health and mental health concerns.
 - m. The available evidence does not enable me to make a specific Finding as to how Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau and Felicity Ruth Loveday came to be without the personal flotation devices which they were seen to be wearing. Similarly, the available evidence does not enable me to make a specific Finding as to whether or not Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau's and Felicity Ruth Loveday's disappearance and deaths resulted from misadventure.
97. AND, having heard the *viva voce* evidence of my Coroner's Investigator, DLSC Obst, I find that Adrian Christian Victor Meneveau contributed to his mother, Felicity Ruth Loveday's disappearance and her death as the weight of the available evidence indicates that he took his

vulnerable and disabled 83-year-old mother who suffered dementia out on Port Phillip Bay in a vessel not suited to this purpose in light of the intended duration of his voyage and having researched the weather forecast for that area before he set sail.

PUBLICATION OF FINDING

98. Pursuant to section 73(1) of the Act, unless otherwise ordered by a coroner, the Findings, Comments and Recommendations made following an inquest must be published on the Internet in accordance with the rules, and I make no such order.

DISTRIBUTION OF FINDING

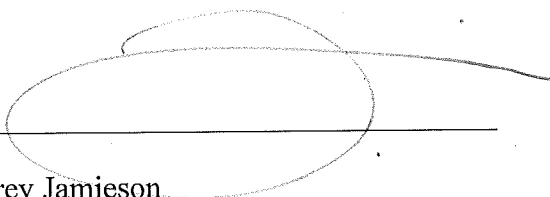
99. I direct that a copy of this finding is provided to:

Christina Meneveau

The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for Victoria

Detective Leading Senior Constable Christopher Obst, Coroner's Investigator

Signature:



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Audrey Jamieson', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is somewhat stylized and loops back to the left.

Audrey Jamieson

Coroner

Date: 29 November 2021