



IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

COR 2022 005067

FINDING INTO DEATH WITHOUT INQUEST

Form 38 Rule 63(2)

*Section 67 of the **Coroners Act 2008***

Findings of:	Coroner Ingrid Giles
Deceased:	Gerald Hoekstra (born 10 December 1975) <i>And</i> Ede Taric (born 18 March 1972)
Date of deaths:	4 September 2022
Cause of deaths:	1a: Effects of fire in the setting of a motor vehicle racing incident
Place of deaths:	Fuller Road Rainbow Victoria 3424
Keywords:	Rainbow Desert Enduro, buggy, ATV, all-terrain-vehicle, quad bike, racing, motorsport, collision, petrol tank gauge, self-extrication, fire, plumbed-in fire extinguisher, mobile fire unit, CFA

Please note that this finding contains distressing descriptions, and reader caution is advised.

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INTRODUCTION

1. On 4 September 2022, Gerald Hoekstra,¹ 46 years old, and Ede Taric,² 50 years old, died in a fire following an off-road motor vehicle racing incident. At the time of their deaths, they were competing in the Rainbow Desert Enduro Race. The race was being convened in the town of Rainbow in rural Victoria for the first time following its cancellation in the preceding two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The off-road race was renowned for its difficult terrain and tough conditions. One of the competitors in the 2022 race describes that *'the name of the race was the Rainbow Desert Enduro and true to its name, out the back of the long course was desert. However, the start of the course was very different where you had to race through farmland crops. There was quite a lot of tree sections, in particular where you had to pass through a deep creek bed. There were also some areas where you passed through some deep, muddy creeks and areas of lush grass that you had to drive through'*.

Gerald Hoekstra

Background

3. Gerald met his wife, Deborah Hoekstra (**Deborah**) around 2014. The couple commenced a long-distance relationship between Gerald's home in Tasmania and Melbourne where Deborah resided. In 2018, Gerald moved to Melbourne and around six months later, in February 2018, they got married. The couple welcomed six children; Kiahni, Zach, Madeleine, Grace, Annie, Indianna and Mazie-Jean.
4. Gerald was deeply devoted to his family; he loved going on holidays together and water skiing with his children. The Hoekstra family had a permanent caravan site in Eildon and visited every holiday season. Deborah describes him as a *'hard worker, he was motivated and he put everyone else before himself.... Gerry was an amazing, amazing man'*.

Prior involvement in motorsports

5. By all accounts, Gerald loved motorsports, including sprint racing, and had participated in competitions in Tasmania for around two decades. Gerald and his team had won several races. Following his move to Melbourne, he continued sprint car racing in Victoria under the

¹ Referred to as 'Gerald' throughout this finding unless more formality is required.

² Referred to as 'Ede' throughout this finding unless more formality is required.

Sprintcar Racing Association of Victoria. However, he did not have as much success as he had previously enjoyed in Tasmania.

6. Deborah, having been unfamiliar with the world of motorsports prior to meeting Gerald, described that Gerald was a *'very good driver'* but that *'it was all very new and scary'* for her. In December 2018, Gerald was involved in a collision while racing and fractured his spine. Deborah, pregnant at the time, told Gerald she did not want him racing anymore. She recalled that the seriousness of the collision scared Gerald, and he sold his sprintcar and equipment.
7. In 2019, the couple moved to a large property in Upper Beaconsfield where Gerald built a track for himself and the children to ride quadbikes and go-karts. Around 2020, Gerald and Deborah made friends with their new neighbour, Leigh Monnahan (**Leigh**) and his partner. Deborah described that Gerald and Leigh were both *'petrol heads'* and that Leigh rode a Can-Am buggy (also known as a *'side-by-side'* or *'SXS'*).
8. Gerald eventually purchased his own Can-Am buggy in April 2021. According to Deborah, she hated the vehicle and had an *'awful feeling'* about it. Gerald did not often ride the buggy around their home track because of Deborah's aversion to it.
9. Around 2021, Gerald met Ede through a social media page for Can-Am buggy owners. They spent time together including weekend getaways to Bonnie Doon where they used the buggies. Before long, Gerald wanted to compete in racing with the buggy however Deborah turned down his idea. She described:

'I knew that Gerry wanted to race but I just had a bad feeling and told him that I felt like something was going to happen to him but after a while I caved and said that he could race if it was going to make him happy'.
10. Gerald competed in his first race in South Australia in July 2022. For this race, his navigator was his friend, Robert Gussenhoen (**Robert**). Deborah remained concerned and suggested that Gerald should return to sprint racing instead as she was particularly nervous about buggy racing. Following Deborah expressing these concerns, Gerald was *'tossing up'* whether to sell the buggy or to keep it for *'boys' weekends'*.
11. Gerald asked Deborah for her views on him competing in *'just one more buggy race which was in Rainbow'*, referring to the Rainbow Desert Enduro Race in September 2022. She responded: *'I didn't like it but I said ok'.*

Ede Taric

Background

12. Ede migrated from Serbia to Australia in December 2004 with his then-wife and their daughter, Melitta. Around 2008, he met Juanita Wilkinson (**Juanita**), who later became his partner after they met unexpectedly at a function, and who described him as a *'gentleman'*. Ede received his Australian citizenship in 2007, a source of great pride for him as he loved and embraced all things *'Australian'*.
13. Juanita describes that Ede *'was very intelligent and always seemed to be two steps ahead of everyone else. He taught himself English and was the type of person that when he set his mind on achieving something, nothing would stop him from doing it'*.

Prior involvement in motorsport

14. Ede had a deep love of *'adrenaline filled sports'* and previously raced dirt bikes in motocross. Juanita shared his passion for motorcycles, and they rode together on private land together near Bonnie Doon.
15. In 2019, Ede and Juanita purchased a Can-Am Maverick RCX3. Ede had seen a similar buggy at a motor show the year previous and *'was fixated on it'*. Juanita was slightly reluctant about riding as a passenger in the buggy, particularly in rural areas without a designated track.
16. After purchasing the buggy, Ede and Juanita used it in Bonnie Doon and over time, Juanita became confident and felt safe while riding because *'he was such a cautious and excellent driver'*. They modified the buggy to include indicators, a flashing light and safety stickering so Ede could use it for earth-moving jobs, similar to his friends.
17. Ede planned to enter off-road races in the buggy and asked Juanita to be his navigator. She declined because it *'would be way too fast'* for her. Similar to Deborah, Juanita recalled that in 2020, Ede met Gerald through a social media page for buggy users. She also recalled that Ede organised weekends away in Bonnie Doon with a group of riders, including Gerald.
18. Ede and Juanita knew that Gerald used his own Can-Am buggy to race in off-road competitions. She recalled that Robert was the navigator for Gerald's first race.
19. When Robert stopped being Gerald's navigator, Ede had not previously considered being a navigator. Juanita said that *'one afternoon Ede said he knew Gerry wanted to do the last race'*

at Rainbow and that he needed a navigator’, she could not recall whether Ede offered or Gerald asked him to be the navigator.

20. Ede asked Juanita if he could navigate for Gerald. Given that Ede battled lymphoma over the previous years, she concluded that *‘after everything he had been through with his cancer, [she] told him to go and do anything he wanted and to not ask for permission’*.
21. To become a navigator, Ede joined Motorsport Australia and became a member of the Victorian Off-Road Racing Club. Consistent with his usual dedicated approach, he began researching using YouTube and familiarised himself with the iPad he would use while navigating, and he also asked Robert for help. Juanita said that he *‘did his due diligence in learning how to do it so that he was 110% prepared before the race’*. Ede bought racing apparel including fireproof undergarments.

The Can-Am buggy

22. Gerald’s buggy was a 2021 Can-Am Maverick X3 side-by-side. Can-Am buggies are left-hand drive. Gerald’s buggy was capable of going at speeds of 130 km/h. A similar model (without the modifications made by Gerald) appears below:



Figure 1: 2021 Can-Am Maverick X3 Side-by-Side

23. Gerald adapted the buggy from its factory condition before competing in races and also purchased a number of accessories. These accessories included:
- a) Window nets;
 - b) Safety harnesses; and
 - c) Fire extinguishers with a minimum combined capacity of two kilograms.
24. Additional modifications were purchased from Brown Davis Motorsport including:
- d) A roll over protection system (safety cage structure),
 - e) Aluminium roof,
 - f) Race seats; and,
 - g) Two 35 litre auxiliary long race fuel tanks to compliment the buggy's existing 40L fuel tank, which was located behind a small panel at the front of the buggy on the navigator side.
25. In June 2022, the Can Am #640 was scrutineered at Gerald's home address prior to its first event by an official from Motorsport Australia. The buggy was found to be compliant with the then-applicable rules and regulations governing off road racing, and a Motorsport Australia Log Book was issued.

BACKGROUND TO THE RAINBOW DESERT ENDURO RACE

26. The Rainbow Desert Enduro Off-Road Race (**Desert Enduro**) was first drafted in 2015, as a joint project between the Victorian Off-Road Racing Association (**VORRA**) and the then-Mayor of Hindmarsh Shire. They decided that Rainbow required an event to draw crowds and increase tourism in the local area. In 2017, the inaugural Desert Enduro was held and was repeated in 2018 and 2019 before being suspended in 2020 and 2021 for the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was resumed in 2022, the year of Gerald and Ede's participation.
27. The Desert Enduro formed three different motorsport championship series. Gerald and Ede were competing in the Australian Off-Road Championship (**AORC**). They were in the Side-by-Side Turbo category with 26 other competitor groups.

28. The Desert Enduro was organised by VORRA under a Motorsport Australia permit. As with all Motorsport Australia sanctioned events, the Desert Enduro required qualified officials to perform roles including as stewards, scrutineers, medical response personnel and critical incident response personnel. Fire response at the event was provided by the Rainbow Country Fire Authority (CFA) including a tanker and two volunteer members, positioned at the event headquarters. There were, for the first time, two ambulances also stationed at the event headquarters.
29. VORRA was responsible for the selection and marking the course and to ensure that all Motorsport Australia rules and regulations were followed. The circuit used was approximately 80 kilometres (**km**) in length and traversed through paddocks using gravel or dirt tracks and on established roads. The 80km circuit will be referred to in this Finding as the '**Long circuit**'.
30. There were signs erected at various points on the circuit to indicate the direction of the course, potentially dangerous hazards and braking zones. Top drivers were expected to complete the circuit in approximately 45 minutes; an average speed of 106 km/h.
31. There is also a shorter circuit, known as the Prologue circuit (**Prologue circuit**), of approximately 8km in length.
32. The schedule for the event included a time trial on the Prologue circuit to determine competitors' starting order for the Long circuit. Session 1 on the Long circuit was held on Saturday 3 September 2022, followed by Session 2 on Sunday 4 September 2022.

THE CORONIAL INVESTIGATION

33. Gerald and Ede's deaths were reported to the coroner as they fell within the definition of a reportable death in the *Coroners Act 2008* (**the Act**). Reportable deaths include deaths that are unexpected, unnatural or violent or result from accident or injury.
34. The role of a coroner is to independently investigate reportable deaths to establish, if possible, identity, medical cause of death, and surrounding circumstances. Surrounding circumstances are limited to events which are sufficiently proximate and causally related to the death. The purpose of a coronial investigation is to establish the facts, not to cast blame or determine criminal or civil liability.
35. Under the Act, coroners also have the important functions of helping to prevent deaths and promoting public health and safety and the administration of justice through the making of

comments or recommendations in appropriate cases about any matter connected to the death under investigation.

36. Victoria Police assigned an officer, Detective Senior Constable Kyllie Edis (**DSC Edis**), to be the Coronial Investigator for the investigation of Gerald and Ede's deaths. The Coronial Investigator conducted inquiries on the Court's behalf, including taking statements from witnesses – such as family, the forensic pathologist, treating clinicians and investigating officers – and submitted a coronial brief of evidence.
37. A colleague of mine initially held carriage of the investigation into Gerald and Ede's deaths. I assumed carriage of the investigations on 6 July 2023, for the purposes of obtaining additional material, convening a Directions Hearing on 28 June 2024, finalising the investigation and handing down this Finding.
38. Following the convening of the Directions Hearing and the acquisition of additional evidence, I was satisfied that I could discharge my statutory functions in relation to the investigation of Ede and Gerald's deaths without convening an Inquest, and Interested Parties were advised of the same. Interested Parties include Juanita and Deborah as the Senior Next of Kin of Ede and Gerald respectively, Motorsport Australia / Victorian Off Road Racing Association (which are jointly represented in these proceedings), and Brown Davis Automotive Pty Ltd.
39. This Finding draws on the totality of the coronial investigation into the death of Gerald Hoekstra and Ede Taric including evidence contained in the coronial brief. Whilst I have reviewed all the material, I will only refer to that which is directly relevant to my findings or necessary for narrative clarity. In the coronial jurisdiction, facts must be established on the balance of probabilities.³

CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE LEAD-UP TO THE DEATHS

Friday 2 September 2022

40. On the morning of 2 September 2022, Gerald and Ede travelled from Melbourne to Rainbow towing Gerald's buggy. That afternoon, competitors were given the opportunity to undertake

³ Subject to the principles enunciated in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw* (1938) 60 CLR 336. The effect of this and similar authorities is that coroners should not make adverse findings against, or comments about, individuals unless the evidence provides a comfortable level of satisfaction as to those matters taking into account the consequences of such findings or comments.

a reconnaissance lap of the Long circuit in a four-wheel drive vehicle. It is unclear whether Gerald and Ede participated.

41. Gerald and Ede presented their buggy and associated log book to the scrutineering team; the log book was held by the Chief Scrutineer until the completion of the event. Scrutineers also inspected Gerald and Ede's race apparel which was held to be compliant with relevant regulations. All buggies were given individual RallySafe Units to be mounted to the vehicle. The RallySafe Units will be discussed further below.
42. That evening, Ede called Juantia and appeared to be in '*good spirits*'. He told her '*all about the day and what was coming up for the evening*'.

Saturday 3 September 2022

43. The following morning, between 7:45am and 8am on 3 September 2022, all competitors were required to sign in. At 8am, the Clerk of Course delivered a compulsory briefing for all competing crew which discussed, among other things, '*the dangers of motorsport*'. Competitors recalled that the microphones were not working properly and that at times it was difficult to hear the briefing. This morning, medical personnel also conducted a briefing.
44. From 10am, competitors completed a time trial on the shorter Prologue circuit to determine the starting order for the long race that afternoon. Gerald and Ede were scheduled to commence the Prologue circuit at 11:03am. Footage from a GoPro camera inside the buggy cabin captured Gerald and Ede completing the Prologue time trial successfully.
45. Competitors described that the Prologue circuit was slippery and wet in places. Records indicate that at least three buggies rolled during the Prologue circuit time trial.
46. From 1:30pm onwards, Session 1 of the Long circuit began. The race comprised two laps of the approximately 80km circuit. Competitors lined up in their starting order and started in 30 second intervals. Gerald and Ede were scheduled to commence their race at 2:04pm.
47. A competitor later described that the long circuit was slippery, rough and '*very challenging in spots*'. A local resident, Kevin Keller (**Mr Keller**) spectated all Rainbow off-road races. He always watched from a '*spot on Fuller Road between [the] Fuller and Miatke farms*', approximately halfway between Fuller Road and Bullock-Bottom Road. Mr Keller said he chose this spot because '*it's accident prone*' and is '*the slipperiest and probably the most dangerous spot on the track*' due to the clay ground and a bend in the track. During Session

- 1, Mr Keller observed *'probably four vehicles clip the trees at that bend'* but they continued driving.
48. Records indicated that at least four buggies rolled during Session 1. There were no injuries recorded. That evening, Gerald sent a text message to Deborah and told her that he and Ede were in 33rd position overall, and 13th in their category of 26. Deborah said she was proud and that she wished she was there to watch.
49. Conversely, Ede spoke with Juanita who recalled the call was *'really off'*. She asked what was wrong, but he said *'I don't know'* repeatedly. Juanita felt *'there was maybe a bit of regret'* about competing, she tried to cheer him up. Juanita considered driving to Rainbow to pick him up and take him home that night, but knew that Ede would not want to let Gerald down by pulling out of the next day's race.

Sunday 4 September 2022

50. During the morning of 4 September 2022, competitors signed in again and at 7:35am, the Clerk of Course delivered another briefing. The Clerk stated it was shorter than the briefing delivered the previous day *'because [they] had explained everything to the same group of competitors on the Saturday'*.
51. A Course Checker liaised with competitors in the pit lane garages about any complaints or concerns regarding the circuit and *'no concerns were raised [. . .] at any point by any competitors'*. A fellow competitor was in the pit lane near Gerald and Ede. He recalled that Ede *'may have been a bit nervous because he wasn't overly outspoken'*. At 7:54am, Gerald sent Deborah a text message that *'he was just about to start racing and that he loved [her] the biggest'*.
52. At 8am, all competitors lined up at the start line for the commencement of Session 2. Gerald and Ede were scheduled to start at 8:47am. Around this time, Mr Keller arrived at his usual spot on Fuller Road to spectate. He noticed that the track *'had dried out a bit. The banks were still greasy though'*. When the first buggy passed Mr Keller, he noticed a stark difference in its speed from Session 1 the previous day and that it *'was just hammering'*.
53. Gerald and Ede took off as scheduled and raced through paddocks. They approached a 90° turn which marked the start of Fuller Road. This portion of the circuit comprises two-wheel tracks made in the grass. The track is shouldered by trees and shrubs on both sides. This section of the circuit has a straight stretch of road, which allows competitors to gain

considerable speed as they approach a tight chicane. Red and white arrow signs were positioned to notify drivers of the S-shaped turn.

54. Upon entry to the chicane, there is a tree immediately on the track's edge. Mr Keller watched Gerald and Ede approach the turn and noticed they *'didn't slow at all'*. As the buggy entered the bend it impacted with the tree, causing the buggy to become airborne and roll. The vehicle landed on its right side – the navigator's side – horizontally across the track.
55. Very shortly after, at approximately 8:54am, the buggy ignited and within seconds was engulfed in flames. The competitors behind Gerald and Ede, Mark Foster (**Mr Foster**) and Cameron Polan (**Mr Polan**), arrived approximately 12 seconds after the collision and along with Mr Keller, attempted to help. Mr Polan used a fire extinguisher from his buggy and attempted to calm the fire however he described it *'basically did nothing'*. As he was doing so, Mr Polan noticed Gerald trying to climb out of the buggy. His head and shoulders were out of the driver's side of the vehicle, but he was unable to pull himself out.
56. By this time, additional competitors, Alexandra Howells (**Ms Howells**) and Sarah Corrigan (**Ms Corrigan**), had caught up to the collision and were also using their fire extinguishers against the fire. They similarly observed Gerald trying to climb out of the buggy. Ms Corrigan approached the buggy and tried to help pull him out but, despite her own considerable strength, could not get any grip.
57. Between four competitors, six one-kilogram fire extinguishers had been unloaded onto the fire, with no effect. They noticed that Gerald had stopped moving.
58. Meanwhile, a volunteer advance cardiac life support nurse, Casey Stasinowsky (**Ms Stasinowsky**), noticed the smoke coming from the fire and travelled approximately three minutes from her checkpoint to the burning buggy, as did Alexander Gillam (**Mr Gillam**), critical care paramedic. The Chief Steward was also notified of the collision and dispatched two stewards. The Critical Incident Coordinator deployed a Critical Incident Controller and sent the Country Fire Authority (**CFA**) tanker to the collision scene.
59. Once the CFA tanker arrived, firefighters began extinguishing the fire. Once the fire was controlled, a paramedic declared Gerald and Ede deceased.

60. Data later retrieved from the RallySafe unit indicated that Gerald and Ede were travelling at 122 kilometres per hour⁴ and that the impact with the tree was 12 G-force.⁵

IDENTITIES OF THE DECEASED

61. Gerald's daughter, Kiahni, and Ede's daughter, Melitta, both provided DNA samples for the purposes of identification. On 12 September 2022, scientist Dr Lyndall Smythe (**Dr Smythe**) of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (**VIFM**) noted the comparison made between DNA samples provided by Kiahni and Melitta against the deceased persons. The comparison confirmed DNA matches between the men and their presumed relatives. Dr Smythe completed an Identification Report to this effect.
62. My colleague, Coroner Catherine Fitzgerald, reviewed the available evidence and determined that the cogency and consistency of all evidence relevant to identification supported a finding that the identities of the deceased were:
- a) Gerald Hoekstra, born 10 December 1975; and
 - b) Ede Taric, born 18 March 1972.
63. Her Honour signed a Determination by Coroner of Identity of Deceased (**Form 8**) relating to each Gerald and Ede, both dated 12 September 2022.
64. Identity is not in dispute and requires no further investigation.

MEDICAL CAUSE OF DEATHS

65. Forensic Pathologist Dr Hans H. de Boer (**Dr de Boer**) of VIFM conducted an autopsy on the bodies of Gerald and Ede on 12 September 2022. Dr de Boer considered the findings of the post-mortem computed tomography (**CT**) scan completed on each Gerald and Ede, the VIFM contact logs and Victoria Police Reports of Death to the Coroner (**Form 83s**).
66. Dr de Boer provided separate written reports of his findings relating to each Gerald and Ede dated 19 November 2022.

⁴ This was significantly faster than the buggy travelled at that stretch of the circuit the day prior, when it was travelling at 107 km/h. However, it was travelling similarly fast to other buggies during Session 2.

⁵ G-force is a measure of sudden changes in speed of an object determine by acceleration/deceleration and direction. The more rapid the change in speed, the greater G-force is produced. For reference, high-force roller coasters produce approximately 4-6Gs on riders. High speed motorsport collisions produce approximately 10-30Gs however some motorsport collisions have recorded significantly higher.

67. The post-mortem examination revealed that Gerald sustained fractures to both lower legs. Ede sustained a fracture to the right thigh.
68. Both Gerald and Ede had soot deposits in the upper and lower airways, and in the oesophagus indicating the inhalation of fire products, with Dr de Boer concluding that therefore both Gerald and Ede were alive at the time of the fire.
69. Toxicological analysis of samples obtained from both Gerald and Ede did not detect any alcohol or other common drugs or poisons.
70. Dr de Boer provided an opinion that the medical cause of death for both Gerald and Ede was 1(a) *Effects of fire in the setting of a motor vehicle racing incident*.
71. I accept Dr de Boer's opinion.

NATURAL JUSTICE RESPONSE

72. On 23 June 2026, the Court provided Motorsport Australia and VORRA (which were jointly represented) with the opportunity to respond to certain of my proposed findings. Their detailed response, provided promptly on 22 July 2026, has been carefully considered and is reflected at various points in the present finding. On 23 June 2026, the Court also invited any comment on certain of my proposed findings from the Australian Auto-Sport Alliance (**AASA**), given my reference to certain AASA regulations and my intention to direct recommendations to both MSA and AASA (the latter being an alternative sanctioning body for off-road races). No response was received from AASA.

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE

73. A Critical Incident Response Plan (**CIRP**) was put in place prior to the Desert Enduro. The CIRP is a competition-specific document, drafted by the organisers using a Motorsport Australia template, and specified the actions to be taken once the standard emergency procedures had been implemented under the direction of the Clerk of the Course.
74. As a new requirement of Motorsport Australia in 2022, all buggies were fitted with RallySafe units. RallySafe is an in-vehicle unit which during a race, captures and transmits real-time data and messages including warnings, hazards and pass requests between buggies and with stewards at event headquarters. These messages can be submitted automatically (when the unit detects a change in conditions) or manually (usually by the navigator).

75. At 8:54am, the RallySafe unit in Gerald and Ede's buggy registered the collision and automatically sent a '*hazard with high forces recorded*' message. This message was received by Race Control 15 seconds after it was sent. Ede also sent a manual SOS via the RallySafe unit four seconds after the automatic notification.
76. When the Chief Steward received the RallySafe message, they deployed two stewards to the scene to provide assistance. Information shared by persons at the scene triggered a Critical Incident per the event's Critical Incident Response Plan and a Critical Incident Log was commenced.
77. The Critical Incident Log demonstrated that the two stewards arrived at the scene at 9:10am, approximately 15 minutes after being dispatched. By this time, the CFA tanker and Ms Stasinowsky had arrived.
78. I am satisfied that, despite some documentation issues (such as inconsistent timing of log entries),⁶ the evidence before me demonstrates that the CIRP was followed appropriately and further, the use of RallySafe technology provided a critical safety avenue by which to immediately alert the organisers that Gerald and Ede were facing a serious incident, and which facilitated the attendance of stewards, paramedics, CFA volunteers and others.
79. I am informed that MSA has launched a new updated Customer Relationship Management System on 7 July 2026 that will, if upgraded, have the functionality for live critical incident logging, which I consider advisable. While making no criticism of the persons involved in the log at the time of this incident, I encourage this functionality to be utilised to reduce the burden on persons logging critical incidents, which can be stressful (particularly with an incident of the magnitude of Gerald and Ede's) and involve a high degree of cognitive load.
80. While the CIRP appeared to be followed appropriately per the MSA regulations, it became apparent to me during the course of my investigation that the equipment and resources available to the event's emergency responders were potentially very lean.

⁶ I note for example that the MSA 'Critical Incident Log Notes' pertaining to Car and Driver 640 (Gerald and Ede's) at p. 225 of the coronial brief include at entry at 8:50am '*Fire engine departed. Smoke observed by Ross from the headquarters area*', which, according to RallySafe data, was almost 5 minutes before the incident occurred. This is contrasted by the VORRA incident log at p. 283 of my brief, which appears more accurate in its initial entry of '*car on fire*' at 8:55am, and which correlates with RallySafe data. I make no criticism of the individuals who completed these documents in terribly difficult circumstances but simply note the fact that there are discrepancies between the various logs that I have been required to attempt to reconcile in making my findings, and note the importance of accurate incident logs to assist in reviewing critical incidents and to assist in determining what improvement opportunities exist.

81. Following the Directions Hearing in this matter that I held in 2024, the Court was contacted by Alexander Gillam (**Mr Gillam**), the critical care paramedic who was engaged to be present at the Rainbow Enduro in 2022 and who was present at the fatal incident. Relevantly, Mr Gillam expressed grave concerns about the safety measures/procedures and available safety/medical/response equipment at Rainbow in 2022.
82. In a statement dated 29 March 2025, Mr Gillam noted that the emergency team at the event consisted of himself, a first aider colleague, some track marshals, a chaplain, and the local police member. Mr Gillam was informed that ‘*we were the only medical resource*’, and that at Rainbow, there is a local hospital, staffed by nurses, but with no Emergency Department function. Mr Gillam liaised with the local nurse at the hospital, on his own initiative, to make a plan in preparation for any casualties.
83. Mr Gillam expressed concern that at the Critical Incident Management Briefing convened prior to the races, he was not made *au fait* with the nature of the vehicles that would be racing and had to ask a series of questions in order to understand the event, which he had initially anticipated would be involving ‘rally cars’ rather than off-road buggies. In response, MSA has noted, amongst other things, that a detailed Medical Response Plan was made available to Mr Gillam’s employer prior to the event,⁷ and that there were a number of officials and volunteers available on the day of the event available to answer questions. MSA submitted that is always open to questions about medical providers and to providing further material in advance if it is considered that this might enhance safety.
84. Mr Gillam also expressed concerns that the local CFA did not have a rescue capacity but would try to attend the event in between other local responsibilities. They were not designated to the event as a set resource.
85. Mr Gillam stated that, in terms of his own involvement at the incident, at 8:55am on Sunday 4 September 2022, he witnessed a plume of smoke and responded with lights and sirens, but did not arrive on scene until 9:07am, at which point the Can-Am was fully engulfed in flames. He states that at 9:15am, the fire was extinguished by Rainbow CFA.
86. Mr Anthony Carrabott (**Mr Carrabott**), President of the Victorian Off Road Racing Association (and Critical Incident Controller at the Rainbow Enduro 2022), provided a statement in response dated 8 July 2025. Therein, he noted that, in addition to those named by

⁷ This is included in my brief at p. 794.

Mr Gillam, there were a number of other attendees at the Critical Incident Management Briefing and stated that, at the briefing, the Critical Incident Response Plan was discussed, with roles and responsibilities of team members canvassed. Mr Carrabott noted that the ‘jaws of life’ were available to first responders though were not ultimately required in circumstances where a buggy was in flames rather than being crushed.

87. Mr Carrabott acknowledged that the CFA was not exclusively assigned as a dedicated rescue response for the event, but that this was not required by the MSA rules/regulations. However, a contingent of CFA volunteers (locals who enjoy Rainbow and motorsport) informally agreed to remain close by to watch the event and respond to an emergency if they were needed. ‘000’ would otherwise be required to be called. Mr Carrabott estimated that 3-4 CFA volunteers were present at the Rainbow Enduro in 2022.
88. Mr Carrabott stated that, in his capacity as Critical Incident Controller, he was on scene in a convoy with others within 7 minutes of hearing the incident reported over the radio. By the time the convoy, including Mr Carrabott, arrived at the scene of the accident, the vehicle was not in flames anymore and was not smouldering.
89. Unfortunately, the evidence in my brief about the precise timeline of attendance by emergency responders is somewhat sparse. It appears that the fire to the buggy was extinguished approximately 15-20 minutes after its ignition.⁸ This is despite the fact CFA volunteers swiftly attended the scene, mobilising as quickly as possible.
90. In such a large course, it is inevitable that it will take some time to reach the scene. The statement of spectator Mr Keller, the local man who was present when the incident occurred, noted that the other vehicles present at the scene *‘had pulled over to the side to let the fireys and ambos through. It felt like a long time for them to get there. I reckon it would have been about 20 minutes or so’*. Steven Perkins, a fellow competitor who was on scene shortly after Mr Keller, noted that *‘I heard the sirens of the fire truck coming towards us and I think it took the truck around 10 minutes to arrive on the scene. The fire by that stage was still raging and the car was basically just a burning shell’*.

⁸ The incident log prepared by Ms Cass Ritchie, a volunteer who listened carefully to the radio and recorded every key update in the log, that ‘police and fire’ were on scene at 9:07am (p. 283 of my brief) and the MSA log prepared by the event steward (p. 225 of my brief) includes that at 9:10am *‘we observed car was still on fire, with 3 fire officials and a general official were still attending spraying water on the car’* (being around 15 minutes after the incident). Without making any adverse comment, I note the fact that neither log records when the fire was extinguished. The statement of Mr Gillam indicates the fire was extinguished at 9:15am, which is approximately 20 minutes after the collision.

91. While I make no adverse comment about the timing of the fire-truck's arrival, I consider that the time it took to get there brings into sharp relief the need for individual competitors to have their own suitable fire-fighting equipment which can be deployed much more quickly than arrival of a mobile fire-fighting unit. This is an issue to which I will return in detail below.
92. However, it also brings into the view the need for MSA to consider a dedicated fire and rescue response to the event.
93. In my view, it is highly concerning that, while the response of CFA volunteers is to be commended, they were there effectively present at the Desert Enduro by virtue of their own goodwill and community spirit. Had they been called to another job that morning before this incident, they would not have been present at the collision scene, and the buggy fire would invariably have taken longer to extinguish. I do not consider that the alternative plan where there is no fire-truck present - the calling of '000' - would have best supported the safety of competitors and spectators at the event.
94. It is true that the MSA Regulations – both then and now – do not appear to require the presence of a firetruck or professional firefighters at off-racing road events such as this. The *Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) International Sporting Code (Code)* addresses the need for appropriate fire-fighting equipment to be present at its sanctioned events and recommends the presence of professional firefighters for certain of these, for example at autocross and rallycross races.⁹ While the Code did and does not appear to mandate this for off-road racing,¹⁰ the current MSA regulations are not explicit as to what is required, specifying only that '*the Organiser must provide appropriate firefighting equipment at the Start Line, the Finish Line, the paddock, and any refuelling area*'.¹¹
95. I note that this appears inconsistent with the approach of the other main body sanctioning motorsport competitions in Australia, the Australian Auto-Sport Alliance (AASA), which specifies that a mobile Fire Unit is to be deployed to the scene, in order '*to completely extinguish the fire*'. For off-road races, these vehicles should be capable of being able to be

⁹ See FIA's 'ANNEXE H AU CODE SPORTIF INTERNATIONAL' or 'APPENDIX H TO THE INTERNATIONAL SPORTING CODE 2025' available [here](#). Regulation 3.4, which pertains to autocross and rallycross events, states that '*La présence de pompiers professionnels est recommandée*' – translated, curiously, slightly differently in the English form of the regulation – 'Professional fire-fighters are recommended'.

¹⁰ Although there is a requirement for particular kinds of rally vehicle races ('WRC' or world rally car vehicles) to have a fire-truck present at the end of a 'special stage' (special high-speed section) where the stage is 35km and over – see Regulation 5.5.1 of Appendix H). This however does not appear applicable to the Desert Enduro race.

¹¹ MSA Manual, Off Road Appendix, Off Road Standing Regulations, 1 January 2026, available [here](#). Further guidance on the refuelling area requirements is present at 6.2 and 11.10.

dispatched to the site of an incident and reach such an incident with an aim of being at the site within ten minutes of such notification.¹²

96. I consider that the lack of requirement for a mobile fire-fighting unit cannot be said to have impacted the outcome for Gerald and Ede, and does not appear to have been required by FIA or MSA Regulations to be present at the time of the incident. However, I am of the view that MSA should provide greater guidance for future organisers of off-road races as to what constitutes ‘*appropriate firefighting equipment*’ at the start, finish and paddock area of an event, including giving serious consideration to requiring dedicated mobile fire units to be present. I consider that the presence of commercial mobile fire-fighting units is a clear option to address the risk of fire without diverting a publicly-funded fire appliance from an area where it may otherwise be required.

INVESTIGATION OF POST-COLLISION CIRCUMSTANCES

97. Gerald and Ede’s buggy crashed when, for reasons unknown, Gerald lost control of the vehicle and it collided at speed with a tree immediately on the track’s edge, causing the buggy to become airborne and roll. The vehicle landed on its right side – the navigator’s side – horizontally across the track.
98. As noted above, Gerald and Ede survived the initial collision with the tree and died due to effects of the fire which engulfed the buggy. GoPro camera footage captured Gerald attempting to self-extricate from the buggy, but he was, tragically, unable to.
99. From the outset of my investigation, I considered that the cause of the collision to be clear. However, further investigation was required to determine why the buggy caught fire and why the men could not get out in time. With the excellent and most comprehensive assistance of the Coronial Investigator, I focused my investigation on:
- a) Gerald and Ede’s inability to self-extricate,
 - b) How the fire was caused; and
 - c) How the fire was attempted to be extinguished.

¹² See ‘Fire Fighting Services at AASA Sanctioned Events’, Appendix 17, 2023, available [here](#). The Court does not have evidence before it about how these requirements are monitored or enforced, which is a submission raised by MSA in its response dated 22 July 2026 to the Court’s proposed findings, and which I accept, noting further that AASA did not respond to the Court’s correspondence on this issue.

I. Inability to self-extricate from the vehicle

100. Part of the side doors of Gerald's buggy had been removed prior to the Desert Enduro and had been replaced with window nets. While it appears that these nets had been completely destroyed in the fire,¹³ GoPro footage from another buggy belonging to Mr Foster and Mr Polan (the competitors immediately behind Gerald and Ede) showed Gerald *'flinging'* the driver's side window net open as he attempted to self-extricate from the buggy. Given the positioning of the buggy, there is no evidence that Ede was able to attempt to escape.
101. There is no Session 2 footage available from inside the cabin of Gerald and Ede's buggy and so it is uncertain what happened inside the cabin after the collision. It is important to note that both men sustained serious leg fractures which would have affected their ability to move about and attempt to self-extricate, and it is possible that they were also trapped and/or pinned by the damaged frame of the buggy. Additionally, having endured a 12G impact, it is possible that Gerald and Ede were disoriented and/or potentially concussed.
102. It is unclear whether Gerald and Ede had practised self-extrication from a side-lying buggy.
103. Regulations regarding self-extrication (at the time of the collision and at the present time) will be discussed further below.

II. How the fire was caused

104. Gerald had spent considerable time, effort and money modifying his buggy to make it fit for off-road racing. This included two 35-litre long range auxiliary fuel tanks, one fitted underneath each the navigator's and driver's seat. The fuel tanks were manufactured by and purchased from Brown Davis Motorsport.
105. The fuel tanks consisted of a filler neck that was positioned and fitted to the rear navigator side of the buggy, near the rear right wheel (recalling that the buggy was left-hand drive). There were two key aspects of the fuel tanks which proved catastrophic once the buggy rolled:
- a) The plastic fuel cap and filler neck cap protruded from the safety cage structure enclosing the buggy; and
 - b) The filler neck did not contain a reflux valve.

¹³ GoPro camera footage from inside Gerald's buggy captured prior to Session 2 shows the window nets in place however, photographs taken of the buggy after 4 September 2022 do not show any window nets attached to the frame.

106. Because the fuel cap and filler neck cap sat proud of the safety cage structure of the buggy, it was vulnerable to damage in the event of a collision or rollover. A reflux valve¹⁴ allows the contents of a tank to flow in one direction only and automatically closes when the flow reverses. When fitted to a fuel tank, a reflux valve prevents fuel from spilling or pouring out of the filler neck if the tank is upturned or otherwise disturbed.
107. The impact of the collision with the tree and subsequent roll-over caused the plastic cap and neck assembly to detach from the filler neck of the auxiliary fuel tank on the navigator's side of the buggy.¹⁵ Without a reflux valve, fuel flowed freely from the auxiliary tank onto the track. GoPro camera footage captured from the buggy of another competitor showed Gerald's buggy lying navigator-side down. Clear liquid can be seen pooling on the ground near the filler neck of the auxiliary tank. Footage captured the fire starting from this location.
108. Victoria Police Arson Chemist, Forensic Officer John Kelleher (**FO Kelleher**) confirmed that the spilled fuel was the source of the ignition. FO Kelleher examined the buggy, the plastic filler cap and neck assembly. He considered additional information including Bureau of Meteorology weather reports for the day, GoPro camera footage and preliminary statements from witnesses. He provided a written report of his findings dated 2 December 2022 and concluded that:

'Having seen the buggy and watched the video footage of the fire starting, there is no doubt that the cause of the fire was the ignition of petrol vapour rising from the spilled fuel puddling beneath the filler. The autoignition temperature of petrol varies but is generally within the range 260-280 Celsius'.

109. FO Kelleher identified three possible ignition sources as:
- a) the turbocharger mounted beside the engine,
 - b) the catalytic converter mounted in the exhaust system almost immediately behind the fuel filler; and/or,
 - c) the exhaust system itself.

¹⁴ Also known as a one-way valve, check valve or no-return valve.

¹⁵ The plastic fuel cap was made of combustible plastic but did not demonstrate any signs of fire damage. It was located among miscellaneous debris at the scene. It is possible that after being dislodged in the impact, the cap was separated from the buggy's vicinity and was not heat-affected.

110. He provided the following explanation:

‘Turbochargers operate at very high temperatures and are likely to reach 600-700 Celsius. Catalytic converters function at lower temperatures, 300-500 but possibly hotter. Both of these components are hot enough to ignite the petrol vapour. The exhaust temperature varies considerably, from perhaps 200 Celsius to 500 Celsius depending on usage. This may or may not ignite petrol vapour.

The position of the catalytic converter and its location immediately above the spilled fuel raises the possibility that it was the source of ignition. The turbocharger could not be excluded, but the exhaust system otherwise seems less likely to have been the source’.

111. Changes to the required design of auxiliary fuel tank filler necks since Gerald and Ede’s death and the use of reflux valves will be discussed below.

Positioning of auxiliary fuel tanks on other buggies

112. During the investigation, two other buggies were inspected to assess the relative positioning of the auxiliary fuel tanks.

113. On one buggy, the fuel cap and filler neck were located inside the safety cage structure on the driver side of the vehicle. In the other buggy, the fuel cap was located on the rear driver’s side, it protruded approximately 10 centimetres from the safety cage structure.

114. The fuel tanks on these buggies were not Brown Davis Motorsport products.

Statement submitted by Brown Davis Motorsport

115. On 19 April 2024, David Brown (**Mr Brown**), Director of Brown Davis Automotive Pty Ltd (**Brown Davis**) provided a statement. Mr Brown stated that Brown Davis produces many types of motor racing accessories, but the main motorsport products are rollover protection and fuel tanks.

116. Mr Brown stated that at the time Gerald purchased the auxiliary fuel tanks, they met the MSA guidelines for fuel tanks and for off-road buggies. These regulations did not require a reflux valve on the filler neck. According to Mr Brown, the design of the tanks *‘including the fitting of the fuel cap on the outside of a racing vehicle met the Motorsport Australia guidelines for fuel tanks and the offroad side by side regulations at the time of the supply’*. I accept this.

117. Mr Brown indicated that Brown Davis had *'no part in the assembly and build of the vehicle'* and its staff had not inspected Gerald's vehicle prior to the Desert Enduro.

Investigation commissioned by BRP Australia Pty Ltd

118. BRP Australia Pty Ltd ('Bombardier Recreational Products') (**BRP**) manages the importation, wholesale and distribution of multiple brands within Australia including Can-Am.
119. Following Gerald and Ede's death, BRP commissioned forensic consulting firm, CNE Australia ('Cause Nature Extent') (**CNE**) to investigate the fatal fire. A CNE Fire Investigator (**the Investigator**) prepared a written report dated 28 April 2023 and classified the fire as *'accidental'*.
120. The Investigator inspected Gerald's buggy and noted several modifications had been made to the factory model, including the auxiliary fuel tanks, a roll bar frame and removal of the doors.
121. Based on *'fire scene evidence, experience and other factors considered'*, the Investigator concluded that the fire was caused by *'the ignition of gasoline vapour which had escaped the fuel tank and/or filler pipe when, during the vehicle collision, the filler pipe cap was dislodged as the vehicle rolled onto its right-hand side'*.

III. How the fire was extinguished

122. As noted, six one-kilogram fire extinguishers were deployed onto Gerald and Ede's buggy following the collision. There is clear evidence, however, that the fire extinguishers deployed on the buggy fire had minimal effect. Victoria Police Arson Chemist, FO Kelleher, provided his opinion that *'given their small size, they were quite inadequate for a fuel fire of this size'*.
123. Gerald's buggy was not fitted with a plumbed-in fire extinguisher system. A plumbed-in fire extinguisher system generally consists of an extinguisher bottle, extinguisher lines/nozzles and an activation system. These systems are mounted to the vehicle itself with the nozzles positioned to provide extinguisher coverage inside the cabin to the vehicle occupants and the engine bay area. They can be activated by an electronic push button system or via a manual system, with activation points required to be accessible internally for the occupants and externally for any first responders. Plumbed-in systems are primarily designed to provide the occupants with an immediate extinguisher response that can increase the amount of time available to extricate from the vehicle during an incident and limit the effect of the fire on the

occupant. The system may not completely extinguish a vehicle fire or provide a complete ‘blanket’ coverage, but they are considered more effective than hand-held fire extinguishers.

124. Regulations regarding plumbed-in fire extinguishers will be discussed further below.

125. The fire was ultimately only able to be extinguished through the intervention of CFA volunteers, as discussed earlier in my finding.

MOTORSPORT AUSTRALIA REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

126. Motorsport Australia (MSA)¹⁶ is a not-for-profit entity focussed on the development, regulation and administration of motorsport in Australia. It is a member of the FIA, the international governing body of motorsport which promotes safe, sustainable and accessible motility for all road users around the world.

127. The VORRA is an MSA-affiliated sporting car club. VORRA hosted the Desert Enduro under an MSA permit. MSA prescribes a suite of general and specific regulations on a range of matters including race circuit markings, stewards, the chief medical officer, scrutineering and competitors’ logbooks, which VORRA operates under when running MSA-sanctioned events.

128. While some race officials (such as the Chief Steward) are appointed by MSA, many other positions were VORRA-appointed. Positions such as timekeeper and scrutineer require an MSA-issued licence. The MSA stated it *‘did not have any role in the organisation of the 2022 Rainbow Event. It did not attend any pre-event meeting with emergency services providers, this is the responsibility of the [VORRA]’*.

Areas for potential safety improvements

129. Coronial Investigator, Detective Senior Constable Kyilee Edis (**DSC Edis**), completed a considered, valuable and comprehensive brief of evidence to assist me in discharging my statutory functions. Therein, she proposed five potential areas of systems improvements arising from Gerald and Ede’s deaths:

- a) That ongoing training and certification, focussed on self-extrication from off-road buggies, be mandatory for competitors in off-road events;

¹⁶ Formerly known as the Confederation of Australian Motorsport.

- b) That a review be undertaken into the Incident and Personal Injury Reports with a view to include more specific details of incident location;
 - c) That the reporting of '*near misses*' be mandated and that they be reviewed by the Clerk of Course and Course Checker in order to assist in decision-making on circuit design and marking;
 - d) That medical checkpoint personnel and recovery crews be trained and provided with firefighting and first aid equipment to improve response times and effectiveness; and
 - e) That the fire-suppression requirements for off-road racing be reviewed, particularly with the view to introduce mandatory fire-suppression systems which provide a 'blanket' cover of fire extinguishant for the whole buggy in the event of a fire.
130. I provided DSC Edis' considered proposals to MSA and sought its input as to whether the organisation was supportive of these or had otherwise, on its own initiative, identified similar prevention opportunities and/or implemented the same. An MSA representative provided a response dated 27 September 2024, with a further statement provided on 8 July 2025 that I have already referred to above.

I. Self-extrication

131. Following Gerald and Ede's deaths, MSA '*made it a priority to review self-extraction requirements for competitors*' and in doing so, had primary regard to FIA standards. It is apparent that, at the time of Gerald and Ede's collision, there was no mandatory self-extrication timeframe, and no testing was performed of competitors' ability to do so.
132. Also relevant to this question are the permitted modifications to competition vehicles governed by the General Requirements for Off-Road vehicles and the Specific Requirements for Off-Road vehicles, both authored and published by the MSA.
133. The general requirements at the time of the Desert Enduro 2022 stated that the frame of competing vehicles must have two points of entry and that one must be able to be used if the vehicle is on its side or roof. In its statement MSA indicated that it required, as an existing regulation, that the crews must be able to exit the vehicle within 10 seconds. MSA stated that whether competitors can self-extricate within the required 10 seconds is not formally assessed but that '*the onus is on the competitor to ensure that they comply*'.

134. The evidence before me in the brief suggests that the regulations in place at the time of the incident (coming into force on 1 January 2022) specified this to be in fact an issue of buggy design: *‘The Safety Cage shall be designed and constructed to enable both crew to self-extricate from the vehicle within a 10 second period’*, versus requirements as of October 2022, after the incident: *‘The crews must be able to exit the vehicle within 10 seconds’*. Either way, I consider there was no participant-tested requirement for crews to be able to self-extricate from their competition vehicle within 10 seconds at the time of the Desert Enduro in 2022.
135. On 6 December 2023, MSA published a media release titled *‘Ensuring safety – new self-extraction requirements in 2024 & 2025’*. It outlined MSA’s phased introduction of a stricter minimum time for self-extrication of 10 seconds and gave competitors *‘the opportunity to learn and practice the skill and/or alter their vehicle set-up, with a view to ultimately requiring a higher level of capability.’*
136. MSA stated that self-extrication tests occur at events nationally as part of regular scrutineering. The MSA indicated in a statement to the Court that the crew is not permitted to compete in that vehicle until the test is passed.
137. In 2024, as part of the staged introduction of the 10-second minimum, drivers and navigators were required to self-extricate within 15 seconds. On 18 March 2024, MSA provided a free online webinar for officials, aimed at *‘assisting them to further understand the testing procedures involved with the new self-extraction requirements.’* There are additional online resources published by MSA for competitors regarding the requirement. The 10-second requirement came into force from 1 January 2025.
138. However, under the MSA updated Self-Extraction Policy dated 17 February 2025, there appears to be no requirement for competitors to be tested prior to undertaking a race, with testing to be undertaken *‘as time permits’*.¹⁷
139. I consider this to be a gap. While additional tests performed as part of the scrutineering process will invariably add time to the overall process, I consider mandatory testing to be a critical

¹⁷ See Self-Extraction Policy, 17 February 2025, available [here](#): *‘It is NOT mandatory for any/all Drivers, Co-Drivers or Navigators to have completed a self-extraction test before competing in an Automobile. Initial Self Extraction Testing of Drivers, Co-Drivers or Navigators will be performed as time permits. Continued Self Extraction Testing will prioritise Drivers, Co-Drivers or Navigators in Automobile/s who have the longest time since last being tested and being longer than 12 months’* (emphasis original).

aspect of ensuring that each and every competitor is capable of self-extracting in the required time period in the event of a critical incident.

140. In its response dated 22 July 2026 to the Court’s proposed findings, MSA stated that it is open to trialling a system to test all competitors. It also submits, and I accept, that it has long required competitors to be able to self-extricate from their vehicles, though I note that the mandatory 10-second extraction requirement only commenced last year. MSA underscores, amongst other things, that it takes its self-extrication policy seriously and that the high pass rates for competitors who are tested show that ‘*most competitors are able to self-extricate in time*’ (namely, within 10 seconds).
141. While I consider this to be encouraging, I am of the view that a mandatory testing regime ensuring that all competitors can self-extricate in time is a relatively ‘quick win’ to ensure compliance of all with existing MSA requirements. I note that this is supported by MSA.

II. Auxiliary fuel tanks and reflux valves

142. At the time of the Desert Enduro 2022, the MSA did not prescribe fuel consumption limits for the competition category. Generally, it is understood that competitors will fill their tanks with the minimum amount of fuel as is necessary to complete the course to prevent unnecessary weight. The MSA was unable to provide any estimate of how much fuel would usually be carried or used during the Desert Enduro.¹⁸
143. The MSA does not limit the number of fuel tanks fitted to an off-road vehicle,¹⁹ and at the time of Gerald and Ede’s deaths, did not regulate how they were fitted to a vehicle. There was no regulation at the time of the Desert Enduro 2022 that the filler necks of the auxiliary fuel tanks could not sit proud of the safety cage structure – indeed, Gerald and Ede’s buggy had passed its scrutineering check based on the regulations in force at the time.
144. Following the fatal incident, MSA mandated, with respect to off-road vehicles, that:

¹⁸ This relies on specific measurements including the cubic centimetre (CC) capacity of the engine and acceleration/deceleration patterns.

¹⁹ In a response to my proposed findings dated 22 July 2026, MSA underscored that it does not need to limit the number of fuel tanks fitted to a vehicle as ‘*there are no inherent dangers of having more than one fuel tank per vehicle*’, and further, fuel tanks add weight and reduce speed so competitors will typically carry the minimum amount of fuel required. The issue of whether additional fuel tanks present increased risks to competitors was not within the scope of my investigation, and for completeness, the observation that MSA does not impose limits to the number of fuel tanks is a factual observation with no intended adverse flavour.

- a) When affixing a fuel cap and fuel filler neck, that they both be contained within the chassis or safety cage structure to ensure that the fuel filler cap and filler neck are protected in the event of any incident; and
- b) Reflux valves must be fitted to the filler neck.

145. MSA stated that these changes were introduced *‘as soon as it became apparent to Motorsport Australia that the composition of the fuel tank on Mr Hoekstra and Mr Taric’s vehicle may have had a role to play in their deaths’*. The changes were publicised to competitors via media releases and scrutineers. They are to be commended.

III. Fire extinguisher systems

146. At the time of Gerald and Ede’s deaths, MSA guidelines required that each vehicle must be fitted with hand-held fire extinguishers for the *‘primary purpose of providing an extinguishing mechanism in order to prolong the period of time available to extract to automobile occupant(s) in the event of a fire’*.

147. Off-road vehicles were required to have fire extinguishers with a minimum capacity of 2 kilograms; this could be satisfied by two one-kilogram extinguishers or one two-kilogram extinguisher.

148. Competitors could choose to install a plumbed-in fire extinguisher system as was noted above. If competitors chose to install a plumbed-in fire extinguisher system, they were still required to carry two kilograms of hand-held fire extinguishers.

149. Since this time, MSA has doubled its minimum fire extinguisher requirement from two kilograms to four kilograms.²⁰ While plumbed-in fire extinguishers remain optional, they are *‘highly recommended’* by MSA. Vehicles fitted with a plumbed-in fire extinguisher will still, under current regulations, require four kilograms of hand-held fire extinguisher.

150. At the time of its statement, in September 2024, the MSA was *‘considering mandating’* plumbed-in fire extinguisher systems for off-road vehicles. According to the MSA, there were many obstacles facing the proposal including limits on supply given that no plumbed-in systems are manufactured in Australia, that they may be cost-prohibitive and that there must be rigorous and experienced providers for servicing. The MSA anticipated that any mandate will need an *‘appropriate timeline leading to the requirement’* including a *‘grace period’* to

²⁰ 2024 Motorsport Australia Manual, Technical Appendix, Schedule H – Fire Extinguishers, Table H-1.

allow for supply issues to resolve and for MSA to collate a list of approved national servicing providers.

151. The MSA was also concerned that a decision to mandate plumbed-in extinguisher systems could lead to event organisers approaching other sanctioning bodies in the country²¹ with more cost-effective rules. The MSA warned this might *‘undermine the efficacy of the safety measure’*. I accept this, and do not intend to limit my recommendations to MSA alone.
152. There has been a change in approach since MSA made its statement to the Court, that I shall discuss further below.

IV. Reporting near-misses

153. MSA stated that developing a reporting system for near misses is difficult, primarily due to the difficulty of defining a *‘near miss’*. For example, what a layperson may consider a near-miss (oversteering or momentary losses of control) may not be seen as unusual or notable within the motorsport community.
154. I note that during the Prologue circuit time trial on 3 September 2022, records documents that at least three buggies rolled, and that four buggies rolled during Session 1. MSA stated that *‘a roll-over in a certain location does not necessarily have any, or any important, correlation to risk with a section of course’*. The organisation was, however, *‘considering only classing a rollover as a “near miss” if it requires intervention, e.g. if it results in damage or has an effect such that the crew cannot continue in the competition because of the roll-over’*.
155. MSA was, as of September 2024, reviewing how to best expand its feedback system. As noted, on the mornings of 3 and 4 September 2022 a Course Checker liaised with competitors in the pit lane garages about any complaints or concerns regarding the circuit and *‘no concerns were raised [. . .] at any point by any competitors’*. MSA stated that its review was focussed on including an additional process for competitors to report any issues or concerns they had to a feedback email or phone number, with contact details being advertised on signage and event entry information and communicated during briefings. It is MSA’s aim that these additions would *‘encourage contemporaneous compliance with reporting of concerns arising*

²¹ The MSA is the only FIA-authorised governing body for four-wheeled sports nationally but is not the only provider of licensing and event insurance for off-road motorsport racing. Other bodies identified by MSA are the Australia Auto-Sport Alliance (the primary alternative sanctioning body for four-wheeled motorsport) and RACERS (a smaller sanctioning body providing sanctioning and insurance cover for some motorsport events but does not focus on off-road events).

throughout an event, such as course conditions (i.e. slippery, deep ruts forming, water on course etc.) or other issues they have noticed which could impact on safety’.

156. On 5 December 2024, MSA provided an update on its review and stated that it was implementing a staged approach to improve competitor reporting. For the 2025 season, this involved:

- a) Active calls for formal feedback incorporated into event programs. Supplementary Regulations and other event documents sent to competitors ahead of an event which will also include the Off-Road Manager’s details including their mobile phone number and email address;
- b) The topic of feedback becoming part of the template structure for all pre-event safety briefings conducted at Off-Road events (which are mandatory). During these briefings, the contact details will be provided for the Off-Road Manager and any other event safety representative; and
- c) As a further step, MSA was workshopping how best to build feedback forms into its website and technology platforms.

157. MSA stated its intention was to formalise feedback from ‘*word of mouth*’ discussions through MSA structures, so they can be properly analysed and actioned. I commend this and consider that MSA should prioritise ongoing efforts to record near misses with the view of enhancing participant safety.

V. Medical and first on scene responders

158. MSA advised in its September 2024 statement that MSA employee, Campbell Smith (**Mr Smith**), then-Course Checker,²² made recommendations to the organisation that it provide first-on-scene training for crews, including on fire and medical assistance.

159. In an update provided on 5 December 2024, MSA stated that its media team together with Mr Smith were creating training videos for first responder training for State level events.²³ The videos cover material include:

²² Mr Smith occupied the role of MSA Course Checker from 2022 and of MSA Off-Road Manager from October 2024.

²³ The videos had not yet been filmed at the time of MSA’s 5 December 2024 update, but filming was scheduled to occur at Round 1 of the 2025 Australian Off-Road Championship event between 4 and 6 April 2025.

- a) Types of critical incidents,
 - b) The initial response for critical incidents,
 - c) Conduct of first responders at a critical incident scene (including reporting),
 - d) Scene assessment; and,
 - e) How to provide appropriate and effective feedback to Race Control and actions of first responders.
160. MSA was determining how to best mandate the training for volunteers and anticipated it was likely to be done through a mandatory pre-event acknowledgment.
161. MSA provided additional updated regarding its critical incident response protocols including:
- a) Implementing a new '*checkpoints*' policy which required a GPS-located checkpoint every 10km for all off-road circuits and that they be included in the RallySafe units; and,
 - b) Introducing for the 2025 season that all first responder vehicles and recovery crews were to carry at least one kilogram fire extinguisher and basic first aid kits. This material was also to complement the training videos for first responders mentioned above.
162. While commendable, I consider that these enhancements must be complemented by improved regulations regarding fire-fighting measures, in relation to which I will make two pertinent recommendations.

RACING EVENTS CURRENTLY HELD IN RAINBOW

163. The Desert Enduro was not held again after Gerald and Ede's deaths. The Desert Enduro had previously formed part of the Motorsport Australia Off-Road Championship (**AORC**) and the Kimcrome SXS Championship (**SXS**). In 2023 and 2024, the AORC and SXS proceeded took place over five rounds instead of six, due to the exclusion of an event at Rainbow.
164. That is not to say, however, that there have been no off-road races in Rainbow since September 2022.

165. The ARB Australian Off-Road Racing Championship is a competition comprising many rounds, the first of which has previously been held at Rainbow, typically in March. This round, named the ARB Big Desert 480 was organised by VORRA and continued after Gerald and Ede's death. It was most recently held between 28 and 30 March 2025. In 2026, Rainbow did not hold the opening round of the championship, and it was moved to Hillston New South Wales instead. It is unclear why the ARB Big Desert Race 480 was not held in 2026.
166. The Rainbow Rises 240 is an off-road race also organised by VORRA, most recently held in August 2025. I am informed by MSA that Rainbow Rises 240 involves the first 8km of the track that was used during the Desert Enduro 2022 (not including the site of the fatal incident). According to the Australian Off-Road Racing Association website, the next race is scheduled for 26 to 30 August 2026 – which is mere weeks away. In this regard, the public health and safety issues arising in relation to Ede and Gerald's deaths remain salient.

DISCUSSION

167. Motorsports, in all disciplines, involve an inherent level of danger. It is for many participants, an element that draws them to the sport. As both Deborah and Juanita described, Gerald and Ede were drawn to the high-intensity and adrenaline-filled environment. It is also a sport in which there are tight-knit communities of competitors and volunteers who are passionate about bringing people together through the challenges of racing.
168. As a corollary, it is of vital importance that the inherent danger, and the risks it gives rise to, are adequately mitigated by rigorous safety initiatives. This is clearly reflected in the approach of MSA's governing body, the FIA, which promotes the virtues of safety of competitors in its sanctioned events alongside their thrilling nature, even in the face of those events being inherently risky. The FIA states that *'by putting safety at the very top of its list of priorities, the FIA is not trying to kill the thrill that makes our sport unique'*.²⁴
169. I accept that the organisation of the Desert Enduro by VORRA complied with then-applicable regulations of MSA. The evidence indicates that the course marking was appropriate and the chicane at Fuller Road, while a reportedly dangerous section, was marked by a red and white arrow.
170. The evidence indicates that the Chief Steward acted promptly and appropriately in response to the RallySafe automatic hazard notification by dispatching stewards and the CFA tanker to

²⁴ FIA, *Safety*, website accessible at: <https://api.fia.com/safety-0>.

the scene. Even prior to the incident, aspects of VORRA's conduct of the event (such as the pre-race scrutineering of vehicles) went above and beyond what was required.

171. Notwithstanding that I accept that MSA regulations were complied with, Gerald and Ede's tragic deaths have revealed that certain of MSA's regulations required immediate change and that, with the benefit of hindsight, the existing regulations did not provide adequate protections for competitors. Indeed, and commendably, MSA amended certain regulations swiftly amended following the fatal incident, principally relating to:

- a) The mandating of reflux valves in fuel tanks,
- b) The prohibition of modifications to competition vehicles which sit proud of the safety cage structure; and
- c) Investigation into the optimisation of non-fatal incident (or 'near misses') reporting and associated actioning.

172. I consider this to be positive.

173. However, in the correspondence provided by MSA to the Court, dated 5 December 2024, the organisation explained that plumbed-in fire extinguishing systems had not been made mandatory – they were only 'highly recommended'.²⁵ Since this correspondence, on 21 August 2025, MSA published an article to its website titled, 'Three-year plan for Fire Extinguishers in Off-Road'.²⁶ The article stated:

From 1 January 2026, Motorsport Australia will begin a three-year plan to introduce plumbed-in fire extinguishers to be fitted aboard off-road vehicles.

Plumbed-in fire extinguishers provide the fastest and most efficient method to suppress an onboard fire in the event of an incident, and many competitors have already opted to install the system aboard their vehicles.

Considering the multiple class types of off-road vehicles, the three-year roll-out supports a smooth transition for national Australian Off-Road Championship (AORC)

²⁵ In Article 6, Schedule H – Fire Extinguishers to the Technical Appendix of the 2024 Motorsport Australia Manual, it states: 'Each Automobile must be fitted with hand held fire extinguisher/s in accordance with Table H-1. It is highly recommended for each Automobile to be fitted with a Plumbed-In Fire Extinguisher as per Article 1.2. The use of an SFI Specification On-Board Fire Suppression system is permitted'.

²⁶ Motorsport Australia, *Three-year plan for Fire Extinguishers in Off-Road* website dated 21 August 2025 and accessible at: <https://motorsport.org.au/media/news/detail/2025/08/21/three-year-plan-for-fire-extinguishers-in-off-road/>.

and state competitors. The first year of the roll-out will affect the bulk of AORC entrants, with state championship vehicles to follow in 2027 and 2028.

The three-year timeline gives competitors time to prepare their vehicles to be compliant, factor in the requirement in their budgeting, and ensures there is adequate supply of extinguisher kits in the general marketplace.

While scrutineers will progressively oversee the regulations over the next three years, Motorsport Australia strongly recommends any competitor to install an approved plumbed-in fire extinguisher system before the regulation is formally enforced.

174. The Court was not initially in possession of information as to what changed between December 2024 and August 2025 to prompt MSA's change of position. I noted that in its correspondence from 2024, the organisation expressed concerns that plumbed-in fire extinguisher systems were cost prohibitive and estimated they cost approximately \$4,000 a unit (plus servicing fees). However, the MSA's online article stated that the systems cost *'from \$600 through to just over \$2000'*. It also appeared to me that MSA's concerns regarding supply shortage have quelled given it now directs competitors to *'any reputable motorsport retailer'* to purchase the systems. That is to say, many of the obstacles the MSA faced in September 2024 appeared to me to have since resolved.²⁷

175. In a response dated 22 July 2026 to my proposed findings, MSA confirmed that it worked collaboratively with Racer Industries (**RI**) to ensure that RI could provide enough systems for sale in Australia, and sufficiently available trained technicians, in exchange for it being the *'preferred partner'*. Through this, RI offered a fixed price of \$680 for the *'manual activation, kit only'* and \$2350 for the *'electrical activation, kit only'*. While this does not factor in professional installation and service costs, MSA submits that *'it does mean that both the manual and electrical kits now only cost approximately \$4000'*.²⁸ MSA notes that the reduced cost was advertised in order to encourage take-up by competitors.

²⁷ I must note for completeness and with, perhaps, some consternation, that contrary to the position of MSA in September 2024, the statement from Cameron Ritchie (**Mr Ritchie**) of Racer Imports provided as part of my coronial brief and dated 22 June 2023 did not reflect such concerns about installation or costs and stated that (even as of 2023) such systems are generally \$700 to \$2000 per unit. Mr Ritchie opined at that stage that *'unfortunately, fire suppression systems are recommended yet not mandatory in Off-Road racing competitions across Australia. From my experience the cost of fire suppression systems is a small price to pay for another added layer of safety in an uncontrollable situation'*. In a response to my proposed findings dated 22 July 2026, MSA indicated that it considered the cost of plumbed-in fire extinguishers to be accurate at the time of submission, factoring in installation and service costs.

²⁸ It is unclear to me how this mathematical equation was calculated and whether perhaps MSA has subsidised the costs of the units sold via RI or has otherwise arrived at a commercial agreement to reduce the costs of the units for those in MSA-sanctioned competitions, or whether this figure is perhaps intended to include installation and servicing costs. I

176. As with many of the changes that MSA have implemented, the plumbed-in extinguisher systems are being introduced via a staged approach. MSA stated that by 2029, all off-road competition vehicles must be fitted with a plumbed-in fire extinguisher system.
177. There are several motorsport competitions held annually, accounting for several competitors that partake in races subject to MSA regulations. It is recognised that fuel cap changes have reduced the risk of the contents of a fuel tank being disgorged and ignited in the same way as occurred in Gerald and Ede's case, along with fuel filler necks (with reflux valves) being required to be contained within the structure of the safety cage or chassis. These changes have resulted in improved safety for competitors. It remains possible, however, notwithstanding these changes, that dangerous fires could still occur following a collision in an off-road competition – in a manner that has not yet been anticipated or foreseen – which cannot be combatted or lessened by the use of hand-held fire extinguishers alone.
178. In my view, and while noting the submissions of MSA regarding my proposed findings that *'fires are extremely rare'*, and its understanding that *'in all or most cases the fire would be able to be combatted with hand-held fire extinguishers'*, I endorse the eminently-sensible position of Mr Ritchie, put forward in his statement in 2023, that *'the cost of fire suppression systems is a small price to pay for another added layer of safety in an uncontrollable situation'*.
179. While competitors can install plumbed-in fire extinguisher systems before they are officially mandated, competitors would have to also carry four kilograms of hand-held fire extinguishers to meet the current minimum. In motorsport, where lighter vehicles travel faster, it is foreseeable that there may not be an overwhelming voluntary uptake.²⁹
180. Doubling the mandatory minimum hand-held fire extinguisher capacity carried by competitors is a positive step. However, should another petrol fire occur of the magnitude that involved Ede's and Gerald's buggy, I have significant doubts that four (instead of two) kilograms of fire extinguisher would be adequate to combat it. In this connection, I note that competitors Mr Foster and Mr Polan were, by happenstance, carrying four kilograms of fire extinguisher on their buggy – twice what was required at the time. Even when combined with the two kilograms of fire extinguisher provided by Ms Howells and Ms Corrigan, the total six

note that the current MSA website notes, in terms of prices, *'depending on your capacity and type, these can start from \$600 through to just over \$2000'*. The figure of \$4000 is not mentioned.

²⁹ I note in this regard that Ms Howells, one of the competitors who assisted Gerald and Ede, had a plumbed-in fire extinguisher system at the time of the Desert Enduro 2022.

kilograms of fire extinguisher were entirely inadequate to control the fire and allow Gerald and Ede to escape the burning buggy.

181. In my view, this brings into sharp relief the need for MSA regulations which mandate the fitting of a plumbed-in fire extinguisher to be made expeditiously (that is, sooner than three years) in order to best minimise the risk of future serious injuries and/or deaths, noting that *‘plumbed-in fire extinguishers provide the fastest and most efficient method to suppress an onboard fire in the event of an incident’*.³⁰
182. I note that MSA does not support a shorter timeframe for all off-road vehicles in its sanctioned events to have plumbed-in fire extinguishers.³¹ However, noting that MSA will require all competitors in off-road races to fit plumbed-in fire extinguishers (and thus that the initiative is supported), has addressed its previous concerns as to adequate supply and unit costs, and that the onus is on individual competitors to purchase and install the systems, the rationale for the extended roll-out period is not supportable in my view.

183. I will make an apposite recommendation in this regard.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

184. Pursuant to section 67(1) of the *Coroners Act 2008*, I make the following findings:
- a) the identity of the deceased was Gerald Hoekstra, born 10 December 1975;
 - b) the death occurred on 4 September 2022 at Fuller Road, Rainbow Victoria 3424, from 1(a) *Effects of fire in the setting of a motor vehicle racing incident*; and,
 - c) the death occurred in the circumstances described above.
185. Pursuant to section 67(1) of the *Coroners Act 2008*, I make the following findings:

³⁰ In the words of MSA, available [here](#). I note that in a letter of 22 July 2026 responding to my proposed findings, MSA underscored, *inter alia*, that the fire involving Gerald and Ede’s buggy occurred in extraordinarily rare circumstances and that there is no evidence that a plumbed-in fire system would have been capable of preventing their deaths. MSA submits that the requirement for flush fuel tanks and/or reflux valves addresses the risk of fuel tank spillage and recurrence of a similar fuel load. However, I note that MSA has still seen the need for further change by requiring competitors to install (albeit over time) plumbed-in fire extinguishers.

³¹ In MSA’s supplementary statement to the Court dated 27 September 2024, it stated that it *‘would support a coronial recommendation addressed to all motorsport bodies/organisers that plumbed-in fire suppression systems be mandated for all vehicles competing in any off-road motorsport event to take effect no sooner than 2 years from the date of the recommendation’*. On 21 August 2025, MSA indicated that *‘from 1 January 2026, Motorsport Australia will begin a 3-year plan to introduce plumbed-in fire extinguishers to be fitted aboard off road vehicles’* (available [here](#)). The emphasis in both texts is mine.

- a) the identity of the deceased was Ede Taric, born 18 March 1972;
- b) the death occurred on 4 September 2022 at Fuller Road, Rainbow Victoria 3424, from 1(a) *Effects of fire in the setting of a motor vehicle racing incident*; and,
- c) the death occurred in the circumstances described above.

186. Gerald and Ede's deaths were unspeakably tragic. One of the saddest and most confronting aspects of the fatal incident was that both Gerald and Ede survived the initial collision when the buggy impacted with a tree on Fuller Road and died due to the fire which rapidly engulfed the vehicle, whilst other competitors tried in vain to save their lives.
187. I accept the evidence of Forensic Officer Kelleher of Victoria Police and find that the fire started due to the combustion of petrol which had leaked from the broken filler neck of the auxiliary fuel tank fitted to Gerald's buggy.
188. There is no evidence to suggest that Gerald improperly fitted the auxiliary fuel tanks to his buggy, and I note at least one other buggy in the competition had modifications which sat outside of the safety cage structure. That the fuel cap and filler neck sat proud of the safety rollbars rendered it vulnerable to damage in the event of a roll-over or in the event of a more serious collision. Following the collision, given that the filler neck was not fitted with a reflux valve, petrol flowed freely from the vessel and was able to combust with ease. I consider that, had a reflux valve been present, the fire would have most likely been prevented, in that the fuel would not have spilled freely from the tank. However, I further find that the presence of a reflux valve was not required by the Motorsport Australia regulations at the time of the collision. Accordingly, I make no adverse findings in relation to those who sold or fitted the parts.
189. I find that the minimum fire extinguisher volume required to be carried by competitors was inadequate to combat the fire which engulfed Gerald and Ede's buggy and that, despite the heroic efforts of those on scene, the small-volume fire extinguishers deployed had no chance of putting out the fire. The fire was only able to be safely extinguished by the Country Fire Association volunteers who attended with their fire truck some 12-13 minutes after the collision.
190. I find that the Critical Incident Response Plan was appropriately followed, and that those responsible for its implementation acted decisively and appropriately in the face of the unfolding tragedy.

191. I accept that there is a level of danger inherent to motorsport of all disciplines, and I acknowledge the changes Motorsport Australia has made in the time since Gerald and Ede's deaths. Principal amongst the changes made is the requirement that fuel tanks be fitted with a reflux valve and for filler necks not to sit proud of the buggy. Many of these changes have obviated the need for an extensive suite of coronial recommendations, and it is to the credit of Motorsport Australia that it has acted so decisively after this incident to address certain key safety issues and factors that, with the benefit of hindsight, were found to have contributed to the tragic deaths of Gerald and Ede.
192. I find, however, that three key safety issues remain outstanding. In order to prevent the further loss of life in circumstances of fire, additional measures are required for all off-road racing competitions in Victoria - primarily, that plumbed-in fire extinguisher systems should be made mandatory in off-road vehicles as a matter of utmost priority. The extended roll-out period of three years that is currently being overseen by Motorsport Australia means that the lives of off-road racing competitors who do not already have such a system remain at greater risk in the event of a fire – and in my view, unnecessarily so – until the change becomes mandatory in 2029. I therefore make an apposite recommendation as to timing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to section 72(2) of the Act, I make the following three recommendations:

1. I recommend that **Motorsport Australia** and the **Australian Auto-Sport Alliance** require, with immediate effect or otherwise before the end of the 2026 racing season, that all off-road vehicles participating in sanctioned off-road racing events be fitted with plumbed-in fire extinguisher systems.
2. I recommend that **Motorsport Australia** and the **Australian Auto-Sport Alliance** undertake, with immediate effect or otherwise before the end of the 2026 racing season, mandatory testing of all competitors involved in sanctioned off-road racing competitions as part of pre-event scrutineering to ensure that each occupant can self-extricate within ten seconds.
3. I recommend that **Motorsport Australia** develop improved and more specific guidance for organisers of off-road races as to what constitutes '*appropriate firefighting equipment*' at the start, finish and paddock area of an event, including consideration of requiring dedicated mobile fire units to be present.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I convey my sincere condolences to Gerald and Ede's family, friends and loved ones for the immeasurable loss they have faced.

I acknowledge the trauma endured by all involved as first responders to the incident, and I commend the upstanding bravery of Mr Keller, Mr Foster, Mr Polan, Ms Howells, Ms Corrigan, Mr Gillam, Ms Stasinowsky and all first responders, stewards and officials who intervened and attempted to rescue Gerald and Ede after the collision. I acknowledge the significant toll of Gerald and Ede's deaths not only first and foremost on their loved ones, but also on those who risked their own lives to intervene on this tragic day.

I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding and comprehensive efforts of Detective Senior Constable Kyllie Edis, Coronial Investigator, in this case.

ORDERS AND DIRECTIONS

Pursuant to section 73(1) of the Act, I order that this finding be published on the Coroners Court of Victoria website in accordance with the rules.

I direct that a copy of this finding be provided to the following:

Ms Deborah Hoekstra, Senior Next of Kin of Gerald Hoekstra, c/- Slater and Gordon

Ms Juanita Wilkinson, Senior Next of Kin of Ede Taric, c/- Maurice Blackburn

Motorsport Australia and Victorian Off-Road Racing Association, c/- DWF Law Australia

Brown Davis Motorsport of Brown Davis Automotive Pty Ltd, c/- Moray & Agnew Lawyers

BRP Australia Pty Ltd

Hindmarsh Shire Council

Australian Off-Road Racing Association

Rainbow Rises Committee

Country Fire Authority

Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile

Detective Senior Constable Kyllie Edis, Coronial Investigator

Signature:



INGRID GILES

CORONER

Date: 12 August 2026

NOTE: Under section 83 of the *Coroners Act 2008* ('the Act'), a person with sufficient interest in an investigation may appeal to the Trial Division of the Supreme Court against the findings of a coroner in respect of a death after an investigation. An appeal must be made within 6 months after the day on which the determination is made, unless the Supreme Court grants leave to appeal out of time under section 86 of the Act.
