
JURISDICTION : CORONER'S COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
ACT : CORONERS ACT 1996
CORONER : SARAH HELEN LINTON, ACTING STATE CORONER
HEARD : 20 AUGUST 2025
DELIVERED : 17 SEPTEMBER 2025
FILE NO/S : CORC 922 of 2025
DECEASED : PARKER, WAYNE MICHAEL

Catchwords:

Nil

Legislation:

Section 23 Coroners Act 1996 (WA)

Counsel Appearing:

Senior Constable C Robertson assisted the Coroner.

Case(s) referred to in decision(s):

Nil

Coroners Act 1996
(Section 26(1))

RECORD OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH

I, Sarah Helen Linton, Acting State Coroner, having investigated the disappearance of **Wayne Michael PARKER** with an inquest held at the **Perth Coroner’s Court, Court 85, CLC Building, 501 Hay Street, Perth**, on 20 August 2025, find that the death of **Wayne Michael PARKER** has been established beyond all reasonable doubt and that the identity of the deceased person was **Wayne Michael PARKER** and that death occurred **on or about 3 June 2023 at Mount Magog, Stirling Range National Park, Western Australia**, from an unknown cause in the following circumstances:

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INTRODUCTION

1. Wayne Michael Parker¹ (Wayne) was last seen alive by his wife Caroline at their home in Mount Barker on the morning of Saturday, 3 June 2023. He left the house with their pet dogs and drove in his car to a local service station, where he purchased fuel. Wayne returned home at around 9.45 am and dropped off the dogs, before leaving the house again without speaking to anyone. He never returned home and has not been seen or heard from again.²
2. Wayne was formally reported missing to WA Police on 4 June 2023. A state wide request for information in relation to Wayne and/or the Nissan Navara utility he was driving was released, which led to reports from members of the public that Wayne's unoccupied car had been seen parked in the gravel car park of the Mount Magog hiking trail on 3 and 4 June 2023. A Stirling Range National Park ranger confirmed the car was still there on 5 June 2023. A full scale land search of the area around the car was conducted over the following days, but the searchers found no sign of Wayne. The search was formally suspended on 9 June 2023. There have been no confirmed sightings of Wayne since that time.
3. On the basis of information provided by the WA Police in relation to Wayne Parker's disappearance, I determined that pursuant to s 23 of the *Coroners Act 1996* (WA) (the Act), there was reasonable cause to suspect that Wayne had died and that his death was a reportable death under the Act. I therefore made a direction that a coroner hold an inquest into the circumstances of his suspected death.
4. I held an inquest on 20 August 2025. The documentary evidence tendered at the inquest comprised one volume and one witness, Senior Constable Craig Tester (Senior Constable Tester), was called to give evidence in relation to the police investigation into Wayne's disappearance. Senior Constable Tester was involved in taking the original report when Wayne first went missing, as well as the search for Wayne at Mount Magog. Senior Constable Tester also later conducted

¹ I will refer to Mr Parker as Wayne in this finding following discussion with his next of kin.

² Exhibit 1, Tab 1 - P100 and Tab 2 – Police Report.

various checks and prepared the Police Report into Wayne's disappearance.³

5. At the conclusion of the inquest, I indicated that I was satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Wayne is deceased. I set out below my reasons for reaching this conclusion.

BACKGROUND

6. Wayne was the second oldest of four children and was raised by his parents in a close family. He had a particularly close relationship with his mother before her death. Wayne was married from 1990, but he separated in 2004 and the marriage ended in 2006. Wayne had two children and two stepchildren from the marriage.⁴
7. Wayne met Caroline in October 2006 and they married in November 2010. They lived together in Cuballing before they bought a block in Mount Barker in November 2016 and later built a house on the block. The couple were living in their house in Mount Barker at the time Wayne disappeared.⁵
8. Wayne was a carpenter but he had not been in paid employment for the last decade before he went missing due to a degenerative spinal condition. He had been under pain management supervision for many years and as his condition worsened, his pain medication became stronger over time. He also attended monthly physiotherapy sessions in Mount Barker, where he received acupuncture to help with his sciatic pain.⁶
9. Caroline told police that Wayne wasn't comfortable not being the breadwinner and hated not earning 'his own' money, although she did not consider it to be an issue. As a result of his discomfort at not earning a wage, Wayne would put pressure on himself to get things done around their property, even though this exacerbated his back issues.⁷

³ T 4 – 5.

⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 8 – SAR Subject Profile Report.

⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

10. It is apparent that Wayne's chronic back pain negatively affected his enjoyment of day to day life. Over the years, his wife noticed he became gradually more short-tempered and intolerant towards himself and his immediate surroundings, although he would generally put on a brave face whilst in public and never complained openly about his back pain. He was prescribed a lot of different medications, but he did not ever appear to overuse his medications despite having a high tolerance for analgesia.⁸
11. Wayne spent most of his days working on their property. He had a particular interest in tractors and had also taken up bee keeping. Wayne had a very limited social circle, choosing to mainly spend time with his wife at home, although he did keep in contact with neighbours and some family members.⁹
12. In November 2022, Caroline's parents came to visit from the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, Caroline's mother, Agnes, suffered a medical event not long after arriving in Australia, so she was not well enough to fly home as originally planned. Eventually, Caroline's father returned home in February 2023, but Agnes remained living with the couple in Mount Barker. Caroline recalled that Wayne would often feel a degree of stress if he had to look after Agnes on his own when Caroline was at work.¹⁰
13. Therefore, it seems in June 2023, Wayne was experiencing increasing pain issues and also some situational stressors in his home life. Nevertheless, he generally appeared his usual self and gave no indication he might be experiencing thoughts of harming himself. In the days leading up to his disappearance, Caroline could not recall any arguments or fights between them and nothing occurred that seemed out of the ordinary.¹¹

⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 3 – Statement of CP and Tab 8 – SAR Subject Profile Report.

⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 8 – SAR Subject Profile Report.

¹⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

¹¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

LAST KNOWN EVENTS

14. On the morning of Friday, 2 June 2023, Caroline woke up at about 10.00 am. She found a note from Wayne on the kitchen table advising he had driven to Perth to buy a generator for their solar system. He had left the house in his Nissan Navara utility at about 9.30 am. He was gone all day. Wayne eventually returned home at about 6.00 pm, while Caroline was getting ready for her nightshift at Gnowangerup Hospital. They ate tea together at about 7.00 pm before Caroline had a shower and then left for work at about 7.45 pm. Caroline recalled there was nothing out of the ordinary about the evening.¹²
15. When Caroline returned home from work at 8.30 am on Saturday, 3 June 2023, Wayne was down at their sheds, checking on their sheep. He came up to the house and asked Caroline if she needed anything from town before he left. Wayne always went to town in Mount Barker on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays to get the paper, so it was a usual part of his weekly routine. Caroline saw him leave at about 9.00 am. He left in his ute, taking his two dogs with him, like he always did, so everything seemed like normal. Caroline went to bed shortly after.¹³
16. Police have confirmed that Wayne purchased fuel from the United service station in Mount Barker at 9.15 am.¹⁴
17. Caroline was asleep when Wayne returned home at about 9.30 am. Caroline's mother told her later that she heard Wayne return, but didn't see him. Wayne left the day's newspaper at the house and also returned the dogs home.¹⁵
18. That evening, Caroline woke at about 6.00 pm. Her mother pointed out a note Wayne had written and left on their kitchen table. Wayne indicated in the note he was heading out to watch vintage cars. Caroline thought it was a bit strange, but assumed he may have gone with a neighbour to a car show being held in Albany, approximately 50 km away. She

¹² Exhibit 1, Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

¹³ Exhibit 1, Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

¹⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 6 – Chronology.

¹⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

expected he would return home that night but Wayne failed to return and did not respond to her text about dinner.¹⁶

19. Caroline made numerous calls and sent texts to Wayne's mobile phone that evening, but they all went unanswered. She assumed he might be in a place where the phone signal was poor, so she initially didn't think much of it, but Caroline became increasingly concerned as it got later and there was no word from Wayne. Caroline got in her car and went to her neighbour's home but Wayne was not there. She got someone to contact the neighbour, who indicated that he had not heard from Wayne for three days. Caroline checked with other neighbours and Wayne's sister, but no one had seen or heard from him. Caroline drove to Mount Barker to check that he had not gone to meet friends in a pub, then drove along Albany Highway to Albany, checking along the roadside to make sure Wayne had not been in a car crash. In Albany, Caroline also checked at the local pubs for any sign of Wayne's car and called the Gnowangerup Hospital and Albany Hospital to confirm Wayne had not been admitted as a patient.¹⁷
20. After calling Wayne twice again at 8.55 pm and getting no answer, Caroline called the police at 9.38 pm to report that Wayne appeared to be missing. Caroline was still in Albany when she first called the police. Caroline then drove home, where she found that police officers had already visited the house.¹⁸
21. After speaking with Caroline, it was determined there was no information that established Wayne's welfare was at imminent risk. A critical decision was made by police at 10.15 pm that evening that no search action would commence as there were no confirmed concerns for Wayne's welfare at that time. However, an alert was created for Wayne's vehicle.¹⁹
22. Caroline called Wayne again at 11.00 pm and in the early hours of the next morning, without success. She sent a message at 3.45 am asking

¹⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 2 – Police Report and Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

¹⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2 – Police Report and Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

¹⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 2 – Police Report and Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

¹⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 6 – Chronology, Tab 7 – SAR Briefing Report and Tab 15 – Incident Report.

him to text her if he didn't want to talk, so that she could confirm he was okay.²⁰

THE SEARCH

23. Although police officers visited Caroline at home that night, no search was immediately initiated as the police did not identify any obvious welfare concerns at that stage and it appeared he may have simply sought some time on his own and would return in due course.²¹
24. However, the next morning Caroline searched the shed of their home at about 7.00 am and found on a bench both her husband's mobile phone and a small notebook that he usually carried in his shirt pocket. In the notebook was a handwritten note that suggested Wayne may have been experiencing suicidal ideation due to childhood trauma he associated with his local church, although it was not a matter he had previously discussed with his wife. Caroline telephoned WA Police after finding the items as she was very concerned for Wayne's welfare given he had severe back pain and had not taken his medication with him and the note suggested he may have self-harmed. It was also very out of character for Wayne to leave his phone behind.²²
25. It was determined there were now established welfare concerns for Wayne. A state wide alert for Wayne's vehicle was created at 7.42 am. Caroline then went to the Mount Barker Police Station at 2.00 pm and made a formal missing person report. A social media broadcast was made at 3.10 pm, appealing to the public for information in relation to Wayne or his vehicle.²³
26. Checks for Wayne's car found he was last recorded on camera at a Puma Roadhouse on Albany Highway at 12.45 pm on 2 June 2023. It was

²⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 3 – Statement of CP.

²¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2 – Police Report.

²² Exhibit 1, Tab 2 – Police Report, Tab 3 – Statement of CP, Tab 5 – Incident Detailed Report, Tab 6 Chronology and Tab 7 – SAR Briefing Report.

²³ Exhibit 1, Tab 2 – Police Report, Tab 3 – Statement of CP, Tab 5 – Incident Detailed Report and Tab 6 Chronology.

thought that he must still be in the Great Southern region, given there were no ANPR activations after this time.²⁴

27. Caroline rang police at 12.15 pm to advise she had been to Wayne's old family farm in Gnowangerup, but there was no sign of him or his vehicle there.²⁵
28. There was limited options to search for Wayne initially as there was no last known location, his mobile phone had been left at home so it could not be used for triangulation, and his wife could not think of anywhere in particular he might have gone. Police received a number of calls from members of the public with possible sightings of Wayne's vehicle in the Gnowangerup, Boyup Brook and Emu Point areas, but none of them were confirmed.²⁶
29. Things changed on the afternoon of 5 June 2023, when police received a call from a Stirling Range National Park ranger at 2.54 pm. The ranger advised he had located Wayne's utility in the Mount Magog car park. He had noted the car was empty and had no mud under the vehicle, despite recent rain, so the ranger had taken a photograph of it. The ranger then saw the alert about Wayne being missing, so he immediately called the police.²⁷
30. That evening, police received a call from teacher Elizabeth Francis, who had been visiting the Great Southern area over the weekend. Ms Francis went with friends to the Mount Magog hiking trail in the Stirling Ranges National Park on the morning of Sunday, 4 June 2023. They parked in the car park at the bottom of the hiking trail at about 10.30 am. Ms Francis noted there were already three cars parked in the car park when they arrived, two sedans and a utility. All of the vehicles were unoccupied. Ms Francis and her friends walked along the hiking trail up to the Mount Magog peak. They passed two groups of people on the walk up and another group on the walk down, but none of them matched Wayne's description. When the group returned to the carpark at about

²⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 – Incident Detailed Report.

²⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 – Incident Detailed Report.

²⁶ T 5; Exhibit 1, Tab 5 – Incident Detailed Report.

²⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 – Incident Detailed Report.

3.00 pm, the utility was still there but the two sedans had gone. There was a new car in the carpark, which Ms Francis assumed belonged to the people they had passed on the way down. She saw no one near the utility at any time before they left the carpark.²⁸

31. After returning home from her holiday, Ms Francis saw a post from the WA Police on social media in relation to Wayne and she immediately recognised his vehicle as the utility she had seen in the carpark the previous day. Ms Francis notified the police on the evening of 5 June 2023.²⁹
32. Another member of the public rang police on 6 June 2023 and advised she had seen Wayne's vehicle in the Mount Magog carpark at 11.30 am on the Saturday morning (3 June 2023) when she went for a hike to the peak. She returned to her car at 1.53 pm and took a photo of the tray of Wayne's vehicle at 1.55 pm, but there was no one with the vehicle at the time. The hiker also told police she had not seen anyone on the hiking trail matching Wayne's description.³⁰
33. Based on the information received that afternoon from the ranger and the later information from the two hikers, along with their own observations of the lack of mud on the vehicle, it appeared to police that Wayne's car had been parked in the car park of Mount Magog at least since the morning of Saturday, 3 June 2023 and had not moved, suggesting Wayne was still in the area.³¹
34. Records show Caroline told the police she thought he may have chosen Mount Magog as it is remote and he has likely gone there to self-harm. She did not think it was likely he had chosen simply to go bush walking or camping. Although Caroline believed Wayne had not taken any of his medication, police searched his car and found a blister pack of oxycodone tablets, with 18 of 20 tablets missing. However, it is unclear when he took the tablets, so it was not proof of an overdose. Police also

²⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 4 – Statement of ESF.

²⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 4 – Statement of ESF.

³⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 – Incident Detailed Report and Tab 6 – Chronology.

³¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 6 – Chronology.

checked Wayne's fuel gauge and noted he had used one-eighth of a tank of fuel, suggesting he had likely driven straight there from home.³²

35. Caroline also provided information to police that Wayne's mother, who is now deceased but had a very close relationship with Wayne, was born on 5 June, and his grandmother had died in early June, suggesting this time of year may have had negative associations for Wayne.³³
36. WA Police commenced a hub search for Wayne in the area around the Mount Magog hiking track on the afternoon of 5 June 2023. Given the inclement weather and the early dusk given the time of year, the search was only able to commence for a short period on 5 June 2023 before the search had to be stood down for the safety of staff. Other than his locked car, no sign of Wayne had been found in the initial search that afternoon, noting that the rain over the previous days had washed away any possible tracks so no direction of travel could be discerned. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) closed access to the carpark for the night and it was planned that the search would recommence at dawn the following day. A low of 4°C was forecast overnight with a 90% chance of rain, and the maximum temperature for the following day was expected to be 9°C. The weather was described as cold, wet and windy and the wind chill made the temperature feel even lower than the forecast. The poor weather conditions precluded the use of Police Airwing, although police drones were used, and Wayne's stepson also assisted with his own private drone.³⁴
37. The search recommenced on Tuesday, 6 June 2023. Police were assisted by State Emergency Service (SES) staff and K9 deployment. The only thing of note found during the search that day was some possible vomit on the creek line, some distance away from the hiking track, but this was later identified as a type of fungus. The vegetation in the area was noted to be thick, with some sectors impenetrable for searchers on foot, with thick undergrowth in parts. The topography was also steep, which made

³² T 6; Exhibit 1, Tab 6 – Chronology, Tab 7 – SAR TFFS Briefing Report and Tab 8 – SAR Subject Profile Report..

³³ Exhibit 1, Tab 8 – SAR Subject Profile Report.

³⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 – Incident Detailed Report, Tab 7 – SAR TFFS Briefing Report and Tab 11 – SAR Review.

the search additionally challenging. The search continued on 7 June 2023, but again no sign of Wayne was found.³⁵

38. On 8 June 2023, while searching continued, a review was performed by an independent Search and Rescue Advisor, which was then reviewed by the Police Commander and District Police Superintendent. Based upon the recommendation of the review, the search was then suspended. Searcher safety had become a significant issue, given the challenging terrain and severe weather conditions, and nothing related to Wayne had been found. By that time, it was also considered there was no likelihood that Wayne was still alive, noting the freezing temperatures and lack of any shelter available, along with the strong likelihood Wayne had harmed himself.³⁶
39. On 11 July 2023, Wayne's son called police to advise a hiker had picked up a smell of decomposition on the Mount Magog track. The report was investigated but nothing was located.³⁷

RECENT POLICE REVIEW

40. Proof of life checks have been performed, which have confirmed that Wayne has not been in communication with any government agencies, does not appear to have been using his bank accounts and has not used his passport to leave the country.³⁸
41. DNA profiles were obtained that assisted to confirm that Wayne is not a match for any remains on the unidentified human remains database.³⁹

IS WAYNE DECEASED?

42. Wayne was last seen on the morning of 3 June 2023. I am satisfied he left a note on the kitchen table indicating he was going to look at vintage cars to give him some time before his disappearance was noted. He then drove to Mount Magog, locked his car in the car park and went into the

³⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 7 – SAR TFFS Briefing Report and Tab 11 – SAR Review.

³⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 11 – SAR Review.

³⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 15 – Running Sheet.

³⁸ T 9; Exhibit 1, Tab 15 – Running Sheet.

³⁹ T 10.

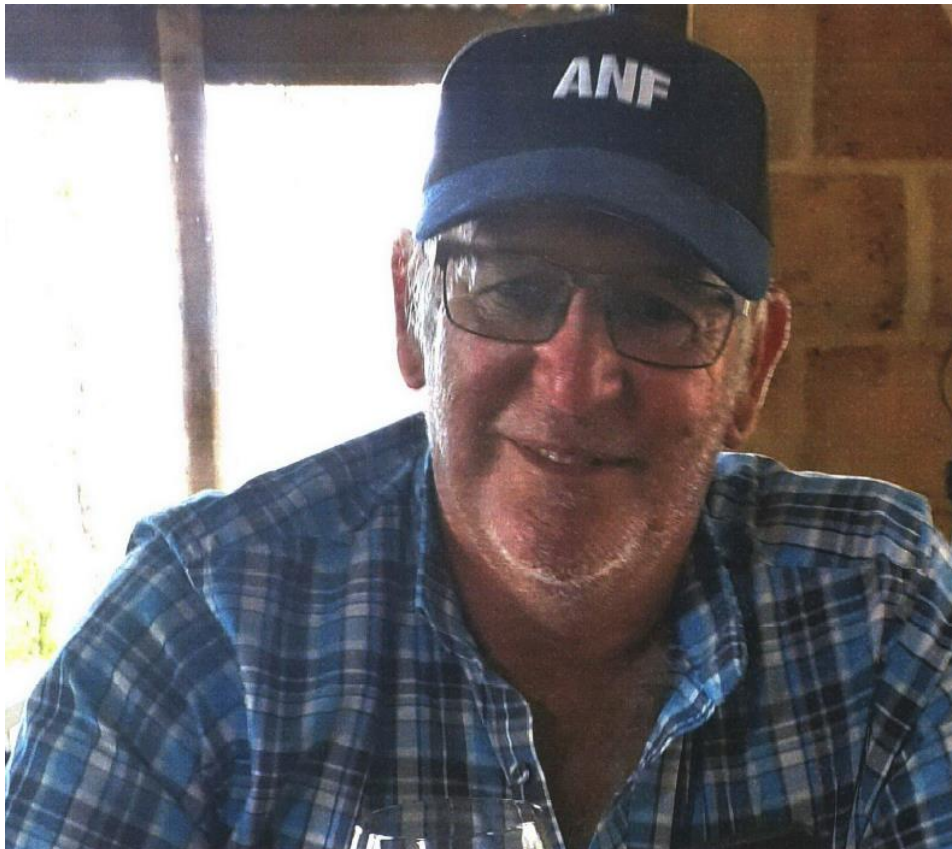
bush. The evidence strongly supports the conclusion he had an intention to end his life at that time, due to his severe back pain and some personal stressors.

43. Since that day, Wayne has not been seen or heard from by his family or friends, which is very out of character.
44. After careful consideration of the available evidence, I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Wayne Parker is deceased and that he died on or about 3 June 2023 in bushland at Mount Magog. I am unable to determine a cause of death or manner of death based upon the evidence before me. It is very likely that Wayne took his own life by an unknown means and died by way of suicide, but I also cannot rule out natural causes or accident, given his poor health and the difficult terrain and weather conditions he faced.

CONCLUSION

45. Wayne was described as a homebody who spent his days working on his property. He had a regular habit of going to buy a newspaper three days a week, but otherwise he could almost always be found at home, tending to the animals or tinkering with a tractor. That is why his disappearance is so out of character. Wayne's wife Caroline very quickly realised something wrong when Wayne wasn't answering his phone, and she did her best to try to find him and then notified the police.
46. The initial search was hampered by a lack of information as to where Wayne might be, and then after his car was discovered, the search was hampered by the difficult terrain and wintry weather conditions. The searchers did their best to search the area thoroughly despite these challenges, but no sign of Wayne was ever found. It seems that this is probably what Wayne had intended.
47. I have concluded that Wayne is deceased. I understand his wife and other family members have already reached the same conclusion. Sadly, this inquest has not been able to give Wayne's next of kin any more information than what was discovered soon after he disappeared;

namely, that he had deliberately gone off into the bushland of Mount Magog and never returned. I express my sincere condolences to Wayne's wife Caroline and Wayne's other family members, including his children and step-children, for the loss of a husband, father and grandfather. Although this finding provides very little in the way of answers, I hope it provides some small amount of closure.



S H Linton
Acting State Coroner
17 September 2025