
JURISDICTION : CORONER'S COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
ACT : CORONERS ACT 1996
CORONER : SARAH TYLER, CORONER
HEARD : 28 MAY 2026
DELIVERED : 14 JULY 2026
FILE NO/S : CORC 1091 of 2026
DECEASED : LAM, THONG MINH BRUCE

Catchwords:

Nil

Legislation:

Nil

Counsel Appearing:

Counsel Assisting : S/c Craig ROBERTSON

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

Nil

Coroners Act 1996
(Section 26(1))

RECORD OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH

*I, Sarah Tyler, Coroner, having investigated the disappearance of **Thong Minh Bruce LAM** with an inquest held at **Perth Coroner's Court, Court 85, CLC Building, 501 Hay Street, Perth**, on 28 May 2026, find that the death of **Thong Minh Bruce LAM** has been established beyond all reasonable doubt and that the identity of the deceased person was **Thong Minh Bruce LAM** and that death occurred **on 22 April 2025** in the waters of the Indian Ocean off Lucky Bay, near Kalbarri, Western Australia, in the following circumstances:*

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INTRODUCTION

1. Thong Minh Bruce Lam (Bruce) was 19 years old and lived in Marangaroo with his family at the time of his disappearance on 22 April 2025. He was a university student who aspired to study medicine.
2. At the request of Bruce's family, I have referred to him by that name throughout this finding.
3. On 22 April 2025, Bruce went body boarding at Lucky Bay, south of Kalbarri, with a group of friends.
4. Lucky Bay is a remote and isolated beach accessible only by 4WD located on the Western Australian coastline, situated south of Kalbarri. Bruce had travelled to Lucky Bay with a group of friends to enjoy the Easter holidays.
5. Bruce, and one of his friends, Mr Myint, entered the water on their body boards, and ventured further away from the shore. Neither Bruce, nor his friend, Mr Myint, were strong swimmers. Both Bruce and Mr Myint got caught in a current, and were dragged out to sea. They both called out for assistance.
6. Friends on the shore saw both Bruce and Mr Myint fall from their body boards and go under the water as the waves dragged them further out to sea.
7. A member of the group swam out to assist and rescued Mr Myint, who was closer to the shore. When that member of the group returned to try to assist Bruce, there was no sign of him.
8. The group sought assistance from other people at the beach, and emergency services were contacted to try to locate and rescue Bruce.
9. A comprehensive, multi-agency search of the land, air and sea was conducted, including utilising jet skis and other recreational craft used by people at the beach to search the area where Bruce was last seen, along with emergency services air and sea vessels, but these searches failed to

locate any trace of Bruce, other than his body board, which was found drifting back to shore not long after he went missing.

10. The search for Bruce concluded on 24 April 2025, after it was established that there was no reasonable prospect of Bruce being found alive after that time.
11. A police officer from Kalbarri Police Station prepared a report to the State Coroner on 17 March 2026, indicating that it is the belief of the Western Australia Police Force that Bruce is deceased, and that he met his death in the waters off Lucky Bay, Kalbarri, on 22 April 2025.
12. On the basis of the information provided by the police in relation to Bruce's disappearance, the State Coroner determined that pursuant to section 23 of the *Coroners Act 1996* (WA), there was reasonable cause to suspect that Bruce had died, and that his death was a reportable death.
13. The State Coroner made a direction on 7 May 2026 that a coroner hold an inquest to investigate the circumstances of his suspected death.
14. I held an inquest at the Perth Coroner's Court on 28 May 2026. The inquest consisted of the tendering of documentary evidence compiled during the police investigation conducted into Bruce's disappearance, as well as hearing evidence from Sergeant Adrian Warring, who investigated the circumstances of Bruce's disappearance, and later prepared the report for the Coroner.
15. Bruce's father, Van Tung Lam (Mr Lam) attended the inquest. He provided a valuable contribution to the inquest process. It was apparent that Bruce was dearly loved, and very much missed, by his loved ones, particularly his loving parents.
16. At the conclusion of the inquest, I indicated I was satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Bruce is deceased. I set out my findings below in relation to the circumstances of his death.

BACKGROUND

17. Bruce was 19 years old when he was last seen alive on 22 April 2025. If he were alive today, he would be 21 years old.
18. Bruce was an only child, born to his father Van Tung Lam, and his mother Diep Thi Nguyen. Bruce's father moved to Western Australia from Vietnam in 1987. On 29 April 2005, Bruce was born in Subiaco. Bruce lived with his parents up until the time of his disappearance.
19. Bruce's family are Buddhist, and Bruce attended a Buddhist temple annually with his family when he was young, however this became less frequent as he got older.
20. Bruce was a fit and healthy young man, who enjoyed playing sports, including indoor soccer, and went to the gym most days. However, Bruce was not a good swimmer. He would generally only swim in places where the water was very calm.
21. At the time Bruce went missing, he was studying chemistry at Curtin University. He planned to move into studying medicine. He was a happy young man, with a large group of friends, and a loving and supportive relationship with his parents.
22. Over the Easter break in 2025, Bruce borrowed his father's car, and on 20 April 2025 Bruce drove to Kalbarri with some of his friends for a few days for a holiday. He was with a large group of friends, staying at the Red Bluff Caravan Park in Kalbarri.
23. On 22 April 2025, at around 8.30 am, Bruce and his friends travelled to Lucky Bay, as it is a place popular with visitors for four wheel driving, fishing and swimming.
24. They arrived at Lucky Bay at about 10.00 am.

LAST CONFIRMED SIGHTING OF BRUCE

25. Bruce and his friends spent the morning approximately three kilometres north of the main Lucky Bay camp site, on the water.
26. The whole of Lucky Bay beach comprises an approximately five kilometre stretch of coastline, backed by bare sand dunes that extend the length of the beach. There is a reef that runs parallel to the Lucky Bay beach about 100 metres offshore. This reef creates areas of the beach that appear to be sheltered, or protected, much like a 'lagoon'. These seemingly calm sections of beach can appear very attractive for swimmers. However, the reef along Lucky Bay also has gaps, or channels, between sections of the reef, which can mean that when the tides go out, strong currents can form and pull swimmers out to sea.
27. Members of the group, including Bruce, spent the morning in and out of the water swimming with no issues, despite the fact that Bruce was not considered to be a strong swimmer. During the morning, Bruce and his friends were swimming in a particularly protected area of the beach.
28. In the early afternoon, at about 2.30 pm, the group decided to move further south, down the beach towards the Lucky Bay Shacks area, which is where the camp site is located. They moved down the beach, and set up in an area where the swell was quite large compared to their last location.
29. They set up a gazebo on the sand. Some members of the group went fishing, while others decided to go into the water for another swim.
30. The area in which Bruce and his friends went swimming was an area of the beach "right where the reef ends"¹ on the edge of the lagoon. Given that Bruce was simply a visitor to the area, and was an inexperienced swimmer without any significant familiarity with ocean safety, it seems that Bruce was not aware of the dangers posed by breaks in reefs, which is where hazardous rips can form as water rushes out to sea in channels between the reef.

¹ Transcript, p 6.

31. Bruce, Mr Myint, Mr Eesa Regal, and Ms Leanne Giang all went into the water.
32. Bruce and Mr Myint had body boards with them, so they went out into the water towards the reef. They went quite a bit deeper into the water than Mr Regal or Ms Giang, who stayed closer to the shore.
33. As Bruce and Mr Myint paddled out into the ocean, they got caught in a rip. The current dragged them both further away from the beach, between the gap in the reef, and out to sea. Both Bruce and Mr Myint started calling out for help. Mr Myint realised very quickly that both he and Bruce were in trouble, as they couldn't paddle back to the shore against the current, and kept getting dragged further out.
34. Both Bruce and Mr Myint were knocked from their body boards by the waves, into the water. Mr Regal, who was swimming closer into shore, saw them both go under the water, and saw the two body boards shoot up into the air. Mr Regal could hear both men calling for help.
35. Mr Regal swam out to his friends to render assistance, as fast as he could.
36. Mr Regal reached Mr Myint first, and he grabbed hold of Mr Myint and brought him into shore. Mr Myint was struggling to catch his breath at that time, as the waves kept pushing him under water.
37. Mr Saadiq Regal had been standing on the shore watching his son swim in the shallows, while fishing with his wife. The waves were getting rougher, so Mr Saadiq Regal called out to his son to swim back to shore.
38. Mr Saadiq Regal saw Ms Giang swimming towards the shore calling for assistance, and he realised that Mr Myint and Bruce were in trouble. He noticed a body board floating back to shore, so he grabbed the body board and swam out to assist.
39. He saw Mr Regal holding Mr Myint on his body board, and could not see anyone else out in the water. He helped Mr Regal to get Mr Myint back onto the beach before Mr Regal swam back out again in search of Bruce.

40. While everyone was looking for Bruce, his body board had floated back into shore. Mr Regal found the reef to stand on while looking for Bruce, but Bruce could no longer be heard calling for help, and Mr Regal couldn't see him anywhere. Mr Regal was struggling to catch his breath, as he was being continually dumped by the waves while standing on the reef, and eventually had to return to the shore.
41. Multiple members of Bruce's group continued looking for Bruce, but there was no sign of him.
42. The group sought emergency assistance to search for Bruce.
43. Mr Saadiq Regal got into his car and drove along the beach to see if Bruce had surfaced anywhere further along, and to see if anyone was at the beach and able to assist them. He saw a group of people with jet skis, and asked them for assistance.
44. One member of that group was Mr Bausin Barwick. At 3.17 pm, Mr Barwick telephoned emergency services. Mr Barwick told emergency services operators that he was at Lucky Bay and a man had approached him and asked him to call 000 as his friend had gone missing out past the reef.
45. Mr Barwick told the emergency services operator that he had a jet ski, and he was going to go out looking for the missing person, and he immediately started searching for Bruce.
46. At 3.25 pm, Ms Raquel Gillespie also called emergency services. Ms Gillespie told emergency services operators that two men had come up to her to ask her to call police, as they had lost their friend in the ocean. They said five of them had been body boarding in the ocean, and one is missing.
47. Ms Gillespie said the missing person was named Bruce, he was in his early twenties, was of Asian appearance, and that he had been missing for about 15 minutes, and she was unsure of his swimming ability.
48. As a result of these reports to emergency services, an extensive, multi-agency Marine and Land Search and Rescue operation was commenced.

THE SEARCH FOR BRUCE

49. As outlined above, Bruce's friends immediately started searching for Bruce in the water when they realised he was in distress. When they were unable to find him, Bruce's friends sought help from others on the beach.
50. Mr Barwick immediately went out with his friends on their jet skis in search of any sign of Bruce.
51. In the meantime, Sergeant Adrian Warring was on duty at Kalbarri Police Station that day, and he was notified shortly after 3.00 pm that a swimmer had gone missing at Lucky Bay.
52. Sergeant Warring and his colleague Constable Wassenberg were tasked to attend Lucky Bay. They were authorised to engage in priority driving (at a speed over the speed limit) to ensure they reached Lucky Bay as quickly as possible.
53. As Sergeant Warring and Constable Wassenberg were undertaking the approximately 45 kilometre drive to Lucky Bay, the Western Australia Police Force State Operations Command Centre (SOCC) and Emergency Operations Unit (EOU) began coordinating other resources, including police and other agencies, to assist in the search.
54. Those resources were significant. The Water Police, based in Perth, were consulted and arranged for the Kalbarri Volunteer Marine Rescue group to attend and assist in the search. The Police Air Wing was consulted, and arranged for a Kalbarri based scenic flight company to fly to Lucky Bay and conduct an air search for Bruce until police aerial assets could reach the area. The State Emergency Service (SES) and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) were consulted, and they made arrangements for All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and volunteers to conduct land searches to attend the area.
55. In the meantime, Sergeant Warring and Constable Wassenberg, along with other police officers who had attended from Northampton Police Station, arrived at Lucky Bay. By that time, the swell was getting bigger, at approximately 1.5 metres, and there were strong winds.

56. Simultaneously, police officers in Perth were tasked with notifying Bruce's family of his disappearance. The Western Australia Police Force spoke with Bruce's mother and father, and Mr Lam expressed an entirely understandable desire to be at Lucky Bay, looking for his son. The Western Australia Police Force arranged to drive Mr Lam from Perth to Lucky Bay, using a relay of police vehicles, so he could be present during the search for his son.
57. The search efforts at Lucky Bay continued, involving multiple jet skis, recreational vessels, and Kalbarri Volunteer Marine Rescue vessels, but with fading light and worsening sea conditions, a decision was made to suspend the search overnight at 5.50 pm on 22 April 2025. Police officers remained on patrol on the beach overnight, with floodlights lit, in case Bruce was somehow able to make it to shore.
58. The Police Air Wing helicopter happened to be in Geraldton, and was able to refuel and attend Lucky Bay, arriving just after 6.00 pm. While light had faded at that time, the Police Air Wing helicopter was fitted with a Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) system, which uses thermal imaging to detect objects or persons on top of the water, or on the beach. The FLIR system would not detect a submerged body.
59. The Police Air Wing helicopter searched until 6.37 pm, without success. The helicopter then returned to Geraldton for refuelling, with a plan to return to continue the search the following day.
60. Throughout the evening, plans were made for the search to recommence the following morning, on 23 April 2025. Drift patterns were calculated, to focus the search for Bruce to the area he was most likely to be, based upon the prevailing conditions, and arrangements were made for other resources, including police officers, police drones, SES volunteers, ATV vehicles, jet skis and marine vessels to return to recommence the search at daylight.
61. The Western Australia Police Force telephoned a respected survival expert, Dr Luckin, at 7.55 pm on 22 April 2025, to seek his advice as to the timeframe in which it would be possible for Bruce to have survived in the water, to assist in planning the search.

62. At 8.56 pm on 22 April 2025, Dr Luckin provided a written opinion to the Western Australia Police Force where he expressed the opinion that there was only a very small chance that Bruce was still alive at the time of their telephone call, given that Bruce had been seen to go under the water over five hours earlier, and not resurface. Dr Luckin expressed the opinion that the best case scenario would be the possibility that Bruce could survive until 1.00 am on 23 April 2025, but only if he was in fact a much better swimmer than he was reported to be.
63. Dr Luckin expressed the opinion that there was no prospect of Bruce surviving until daylight, over thirteen hours after he was last seen alive.
64. As a result, the search efforts, which resumed at daylight on 23 April 2025, became a search for Bruce's body.
65. Search efforts continued over the following days, until it became apparent that all reasonable search efforts had been completed.
66. Bruce's father, Mr Lam, spoke with Inspector Keen, a senior police officer who had attended Lucky Bay to assist in the search, on 24 April 2025 at about 10.00 am. At that time, Inspector Keen explained to Mr Lam that the Western Australia Police Force had reached the stage where the search for Bruce would be scaled down.
67. While this must have been devastating news for Mr Lam, he offered his appreciation to Inspector Keen for their efforts to find his son, and explained he would stay at the beach for a time conducting prayers with his family.
68. At 4.00 pm, after detailed consultation, the Superintendent of the Mid-West Gascoyne District determined that the search for Bruce should be terminated.
69. Bruce's body has never been found.

Comment Regarding Search Efforts for Bruce

70. In the course of this inquest, I have considered the quality of the search efforts for Bruce, on the part of both the Western Australia Police Force, but also the very many other agencies involved in the search.
71. It is important to acknowledge the comprehensive, professional, and thorough response of the Western Australia Police Force, and the many other agencies who swiftly responded to the call for assistance on 22 April 2025 to try to locate Bruce.
72. I am satisfied that the search efforts, which continued over a number of days, were of a very high standard.
73. I consider it important to acknowledge the efforts of Bruce's friends, specifically the brave efforts of Mr Regal to try to save Bruce's life. Mr Regal was fortunately able to rescue Mr Myint when he found himself in distress, and he made every effort, at risk to himself, to return into the water and to try to save Bruce. I consider that there was nothing more Mr Regal could have done to try to save his friend.
74. I must also acknowledge the efforts of the civilians at Lucky Bay, who were strangers to Bruce and his friends, but who immediately offered their assistance, and went to considerable efforts to search the beach to try to find Bruce. They too, did all they could to try to locate Bruce.
75. Given the remote location of Lucky Bay, and the time it had to take for emergency services to arrive at the location, the immediate jet ski assisted search of the waters by those civilians was essential to give Bruce the best chance for survival, and despite the tragic outcome in this case, their efforts should be commended.
76. Bruce's family, through his father Mr Lam, expressed their gratitude to the police, and the searchers involved, for their efforts in the search for Bruce. At the inquest, Mr Lam said:²

² Transcript, p 18.

Thank you for all the people who searched for my son on 22 April 2025 for last year. I appreciate it. I thank you very much for, you know, the open heart for your situation. But very sadly, we couldn't find his body, so that has been very hard.

77. Mr Lam's enduring grief for the unfathomable loss of his son was apparent in the course of the inquest, as was his very strong desire for no other family to suffer the loss that his family have suffered.

78. I only hope that he takes some comfort from the knowledge that everything that could be done to try to find his son, was done at the time of Bruce's disappearance, and from the information I have outlined below about plans on the part of the entity that manages Lucky Bay to improve water safety signage at Lucky Bay.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE FORCE INVESTIGATION INTO SUSPECTED DEATH

79. The investigation into Bruce's disappearance, and suspected death, then became the responsibility of the Kalbarri Police, as a coronial investigation.

Proof of Life Checks

80. As part of the police investigation into Bruce's disappearance, enquiries were made with a number of agencies and other institutions across Australia to see whether there is any record of contact with Bruce after he was last known to be alive, or whether there was any record which would otherwise suggest that Bruce is still alive.

81. At the conclusion of those investigations, it was apparent that there was no evidence to suggest that Bruce was still alive.

82. Searches of the following databases have revealed no new records for Bruce after his disappearance in April 2025:

Western Australia Police Force
Electoral Roll
Centrelink
Medicare
Immigration
Proof of life enquiries with all other states and territories
Births Deaths and Marriages for all other states and territories
Banking institutions

83. These enquiries establish that Bruce has not had contact with any of the government agencies one would expect a person to make contact with in their day-to-day life, since his disappearance in April 2025.
84. I consider the evidence is overwhelming that Bruce is deceased, and that he died on 22 April 2025 in the waters of the Indian Ocean off Lucky Bay.
85. Police investigators arranged for Bruce's DNA profile to be obtained and uploaded on a DNA database, in the event that any human remains are discovered in the future that may belong to Bruce.
86. A check of DNA profiles currently held for known unidentified human remains did not identify any matches to Bruce's DNA. However, Bruce's DNA sample will remain on the database, and will be checked against any unidentified human remains recovered in Australia.

Western Australia Police Force Analysis

87. Sergeant Warring undertook the coronial investigation into Bruce's suspected death, and authored a report to the coroner regarding the circumstances of Bruce's suspected death.
88. Sergeant Warring's analysis of the evidence confirmed that it is his view that Bruce was dragged out through a break in the reef of Lucky Bay in the current, and fell from his body board into the ocean. Once that occurred, Bruce succumbed to the waves, dying from immersion in the water.

89. Sergeant Warring did not believe that Bruce was injured on the reef, or that any injuries of that nature caused his death. This was because Sergeant Warring believed that by the time Bruce fell from his body board, he had been dragged out past the reef.
90. In light of these factors, Sergeant Warring concluded that the most likely explanation for Bruce's disappearance is that he drowned after falling from his body board and being overwhelmed by the waves.

CAUSE AND MANNER OF DEATH

91. I am satisfied on the basis of all of the evidence before me that Bruce's death has been established beyond reasonable doubt. I find that Bruce is deceased.
92. In the circumstances described by the witnesses, and taking into account the opinion of Sergeant Warring, I am also satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the cause of Bruce's death was as a result of immersion (drowning).
93. I make this finding notwithstanding the fact that Bruce's body has not been found, and therefore no post mortem examination has been possible to ascertain his cause of death, based primarily upon the eyewitness accounts.
94. I further find that the manner of Bruce's death was by way of **accident**.

COMMENTS ON SIGNAGE AT LUCKY BAY

95. During Sergeant Warring's evidence at the inquest into Bruce's death, Sergeant Warring explained that in his experience as a local police officer based in Kalbarri, he had dealt with numerous calls for assistance for people who had found themselves in trouble in the water at Lucky Bay. He provided an example of people who had been rescued after being pulled out by the tide through channels in the reef while on a dinghy which had capsized. Those people were fortunately able to be rescued, but

they were far from the only example in Sergeant Warring's experience of the dangers that can arise unexpectedly on this popular remote beach.

96. In the course of the inquest into Bruce's death, his father, Mr Lam, expressed his ongoing confusion and distress at the absence of any warning signage in relation to the dangers of rips, or other risks, at Lucky Bay. In Mr Lam's words:³

Why they don't put a sign?

I know the people go there every year for camping. And adults, kids, they go in there for fun. But if they put the sign for no swimming, or danger, or something like that, like, they won't go down there.

97. Shortly before the inquest into Bruce's death commenced, Senior Constable Robertson made enquiries of Mr Phillips, the Visitor Risk Management Coordinator for Regional and Fire Management Services within the Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) about whether there was any signage at Lucky Bay warning swimmers of dangers in the area.
98. Mr Phillips explained that the Lucky Bay campground is currently managed by DBCA on behalf of the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) on an interim basis. This arrangement remains in place until a management order for the area (Reserve 35206) is granted to the Bundi Yamatji Aboriginal Corporation (BYAC).
99. This arrangement came about after discussions between DBCA, DPLH, BYAC and the Midwest Development Commission, and is specific to the campground and associated facilities, not the broader reserve.
100. Mr Phillips explained that the campground at Lucky Bay is a nature-based camping area accessible only by four-wheel drive. Facilities at the site are limited and include bush toilets, rubbish bins, and a chemical toilet dump point. Visitors are required to be self-sufficient, which includes providing their own drinking water.

³ Transcript, p 18.

101. Mr Phillips confirmed that there are no signs at the Lucky Bay ranger station, or campground, relating specifically to surf or swimming conditions at Lucky Bay.

102. There is other signage at those locations regarding:

- a. A sign explaining safety tips for beach driving;
- b. A Beach Emergency Number (BEN) sign, which is a unique number allocated to beach access points designed to improve emergency response times by providing specific location information to emergency services;
- c. A sign explaining the conditions attached to camping in the area;
- d. A dune risk area sign, which explains the risks of driving or riding in sand dunes;
- e. A sign explaining fishing restrictions in the area; and
- f. A beach access notice restricting camping in the area.

103. There is also safety equipment at the ranger station, including a defibrillator, in case of emergency.

104. In light of the information provided, at my request on 26 May 2026, Senior Constable Robertson wrote to Mr Phillips and posed the following question:⁴

In light of Mr Lam's suspected death, are there any plans on the part of DBCA or any other management entity to erect water safety signage near Lucky Bay?

105. Mr Phillips responded on the same day, explaining:⁵

DBCA would be open to developing and installing relevant water safety signage at the Lucky Bay campground.

Given the campground layout the best node for installation of such signage would be near the refuse bins. As this area is on shire managed land DBCA will consult with the shire.

⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 31, p 1.

⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 31, p 1.

106. Mr Phillips undertook the required consultation, and on 22 June 2026, Mr Phillips confirmed that water safety signage for the Lucky Bay campground had been designed and printed, and would be installed at Lucky Bay within the next four to six weeks.

107. The below water safety signage will now be installed at Lucky Bay:



108. I strongly support the installation of relevant water safety signage at the Lucky Bay campground. Mr Lam, in memory of his beloved son Bruce, also strongly supports water safety signage, in the hope that the next young person enjoying a day at a remote beach turns their minds to the dangers they may face in the water before they do so.

109. I appreciate Mr Phillips' efforts, in his role with DBCA, in responding proactively to this safety issue. His efforts immediately following this issue being brought to his attention have rendered a recommendation on my part that water safety signage be installed, as a matter of public safety, unnecessary in this case.

110. I would separately also urge all members of the public visiting Australian beaches that may be unfamiliar to them to consider visiting the Surf Life Saving Australia website Beachsafe at <https://beachsafe.org.au> (which is also available as the Beachsafe app).
111. Surf Life Saving Australia provide current information and conditions for every beach in Australia, showing information about whether the beach is patrolled or not, any known hazards, and available facilities.
112. While Lucky Bay is a remote and isolated beach, it is included in the Beachsafe app, with alerts that the beach is not patrolled, and notes that rips are a known hazard in the area.
113. While this resource is a helpful resource that should be more widely known, it does not diminish the benefit of visible signage in the area of Lucky Bay, drawing the attention of visitors to the area to known hazards.

CONCLUSION

114. I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Bruce died in the afternoon of 22 April 2025 in the ocean at Lucky Bay, Kalbarri, after he fell from his body board while being swept out to sea.
115. He died by immersion (drowning), as a result of a tragic accident.
116. Bruce was a fit and active young man. He was a poor swimmer, and unfamiliar with the waters of Lucky Bay, including its strong currents, and unpredictable swells, particularly closer to the reef. Bruce had spent the day in the water swimming with the assistance of a body board in a calmer area of the beach, which may have given him a false sense of security, when he last entered the water.
117. When Bruce was dragged deeper out to sea in the currents of Lucky Bay, and then was knocked from his body board by large waves, he was unable to make it back to shore.

118. Bruce's family and friends have long known and accepted how and when he died. This inquest finding merely confirms, formally, what they already know in their hearts.
119. Bruce's death is a tragic reminder to all Western Australians, and all visitors to our State, that the Indian Ocean, whilst beautiful, can be treacherous and must be treated with caution.
120. Those who enter the water in remote locations must assume a degree of personal responsibility for the risks they take, particularly when they do so on remote, unpatrolled beaches.
121. Having said that, it is my sincere hope that the work being done by Mr Phillips at DBCA will provide a clear warning to future visitors about those risks, so that people are proactively alerted to the dangers they face, and can make informed choices as they seek to enjoy our beautiful, but treacherous coastline.
122. As I did at the inquest, I wish to convey to Bruce's family and friends, on behalf of the Court, my sincere condolences for their loss.

S Tyler
Coroner
14 July 2026