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**JURISDICTION** : CORONER'S COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
**ACT** : CORONERS ACT 1996  
**CORONER** : SARAH HELEN LINTON, ACTING STATE CORONER  
**HEARD** : 20 AUGUST 2025  
**DELIVERED** : 13 MARCH 2026  
**FILE NO/S** : CORC 903 of 2025  
**DECEASED** : PARBHAT,

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*Catchwords:*

Nil

*Legislation:*

Nil

**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 **PARBHAT** with an inquest held at the Perth Coroner's Court, Central Law Courts, Court 85, 501 Hay Street, Perth on 20 August 2025 find that the death of **PARBHAT** has been established beyond all reasonable doubt and that the identity of the deceased person was **PARBHAT** and that death occurred on or about **5 August 2024 at The Gap and Natural Bridge, Torndirrup National Park, Western Australia, from an unknown cause in the following circumstances:***

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Parbhat was a young Indian man who had come to Australia to study and work. He initially lived with his cousin in Victoria, but then travelled to Perth in 2021. Parbhat initially settled into life in Perth well. He moved into a share house, found work in a bar and enrolled in some study courses as part of his obligations under a student visa. He was sending a portion of his earnings home to assist his family in India when he could.
2. Unfortunately, over the next couple of years, Parbhat's happy life began to unravel. Parbhat was assaulted and robbed as he walked home from the train one night after work, which affected his ability to get to and from work safely and economically. He looked for accommodation closer to work and considered buying a car, but he couldn't find anything he could afford. Parbhat eventually left his job in February 2024 in favour of a job at a restaurant where he believed he would receive more hours. However, his employment at his new job was terminated in May 2024. Parbhat's student visa status was also in jeopardy as his college enrolment had been cancelled due to poor progress in his course and the authorities had been notified.
3. Parbhat moved to a new share house on 30 June 2024. He generally kept to himself, staying in his room playing video games, ordering in takeaway food and drinking significant quantities of alcohol. He had no income at this time and his bank balances slowly dwindled until he had no money left. It seems Parbhat decided around this time to attempt a career change and find employment in construction or as a traffic controller. He signed up for traffic control training and then rented a car and drove to Albany in July 2024 to look for work.
4. Parbhat was living in his car while in Albany. On 5 August 2024, Parbhat was seen in his rental car in the carpark at The Gap and Natural Bridge in Torndirrup National Park, about 20 kilometres south of Albany. Some works were being completed in the area and a manager visited the site that day. He saw Parbhat sitting in the driver's seat of his car, apparently upset. The manager approached Parbhat's car to check on him, but Parbhat didn't engage so the manager left without speaking to him.
5. The manager returned to the carpark the following day and saw Parbhat's car was still there, but it was now unoccupied. After conducting a brief search of the area, the manager contacted police as he was concerned for Parbhat's welfare. Police officers attended and found Parbhat's personal items in the car, but no sign of Parbhat. They checked CCTV footage from a camera in the carpark, which showed Parbhat walking around The Gap platform between 5.59 pm and 6.08 pm that evening, before returning to his car. That was the last confirmed sighting of Parbhat.

6. The police officers were concerned Parbhat had jumped or fallen into the sea below or had possibly got lost in the surrounding bush area. A multi-agency land and sea search was initiated to cover all possibilities. During the search a tracker dog followed a strong scent from Parbhat's vehicle to a nearby cliff edge, which suggested he may have gone over the cliff in that spot. A survival expert advised that if Parbhat had fallen from the cliff to the sea below at that point, either intentionally or otherwise, he would not have survived. The search concluded without any further sign of Parbhat.
7. On the basis of information provided by the WA Police in relation to the investigation into Parbhat's disappearance, I determined that pursuant to s 23 of the *Coroners Act 1996* (WA) (the Act) there was reasonable cause to suspect that Parbhat 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.
8. I held an inquest on 20 August 2025. The documentary evidence tendered at the inquest comprised one volume and one witness, Senior Constable Michael Fazio, was called to give evidence. Senior Constable Fazio is the coronial investigating officer at the Albany Police Station, and he spoke to the police investigation into Parbhat's disappearance. Senior Constable Fazio also raised some suggestions for possible recommendations that could improve safety at The Gap. The relevant agencies were contacted after the inquest to respond to these suggestions, which I set out at the end of this inquest finding.

### **BRIEF BACKGROUND**

9. Parbhat was born in the city of Pundri, which falls in the Haryana District of India. He grew up with his parents, Rekha and Ram, and younger brother Paras. His father was a farmer and his mother devoted herself to the home and raising their children. Parbhat had a typical childhood and was a healthy child. He was described as somewhat reserved and he liked to keep his own company.<sup>1</sup>
10. Parbhat completed his high school studies in India and then moved to Australia on a student visa in 2018. He settled initially in Melbourne, Victoria, and lived with his cousin, Rahul. Parbhat trained to be a chef while living in Melbourne and obtained a Certificate IV in Cookery. He was described by his cousin as a very good chef who worked hard in his profession. He also obtained a security licence and he worked in crowd control while studying.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

<sup>2</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 1 and Tab 3.

11. In 2021, Parbhat had finished his first round of studies and he moved to Western Australia to obtain work. He found employment and once he had a regular income, he sent some money home to his family in India and also sent money to Rahul to repay a debt he owed him. Rahul did not see Parbhat again after he moved interstate, but they did keep in contact irregularly by phone. Rahul told police Parbhat never said anything to him in those conversations to suggest he might be contemplating self-harm or suicide.<sup>3</sup>
12. Parbhat was not known to socialise in person with colleagues or friends outside of work. Instead, his main social network was through social media groups. He also spent a lot of time watching movies on his phone and laptop. He was known to drink alcohol to excess on a regular basis, usually when on his own. His preferred drink was wine or whiskey. He did not use illicit drugs.<sup>4</sup>
13. Parbhat worked at Rodney's Bait n Tackle bar and grill in the suburb of Mosman Park in Perth. He worked there as a chef and was described by the kitchen manager as a hard worker who was always willing to learn. Parbhat had indicated he wanted to work as much as he possibly could to assist him in paying tuition fees and his rent.
14. Parbhat was living at that time in Bassendean in a share house, but he told his manager he wasn't happy there. He would usually catch the train to and from work, but one night Parbhat was attacked as he walked home from the Bassendean Train Station. He was assaulted and robbed. Parbhat reported the incident to the police but it doesn't seem the perpetrator was caught. After this experience Parbhat was quite shaken up and he hired a car to get to and from work. The owners of the bar offered to try to help him buy a car, instead of continuing to hire one, but Parbhat was reluctant to accept their assistance as he didn't think he would be able to find a vehicle that was affordable.<sup>5</sup>
15. Parbhat had sourced the hire car through a contact he had met previously through a friend. Parbhat had rented a car from the person in 2021 and then returned the car in 2022. Parbhat contacted the man again in March 2023 and rented a 2012 blue Kia Cerato, licence number 1GWK859, from him. Parbhat paid \$180/week rental and was very regular in his payments until he missed his last payment on 15 July 2024. If he had any issues making his payments at an earlier stage, due to the need to pay his college fees, he negotiated an extension from the owner. They usually communicated by text messages and the occasional phone call. After Parbhat missed the last payment on 15 July 2024, Parbhat sent the car's owner a message via WhastApp on 30 July 2024. Parbhat stated he had sent all his money back home to

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<sup>3</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 1 and Tab 3.

<sup>4</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

<sup>5</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

his parents, which is why he hadn't paid the rent. It appears Parbhat had not negotiated any further agreement about paying the outstanding car rental before he disappeared.<sup>6</sup>

16. Parbhat's manager at Rodney's was keenly aware Parbhat's living situation wasn't comfortable for him, so she had tried to find him accommodation closer to his work but unfortunately she was unsuccessful. In the meantime, Parbhat's lease in Bassendean came to an end, so he had to find another place to live. His manager helped him in his search and in the end he found a room to rent in Cannington, although it seems he wasn't overly happy there either as he didn't have a good relationship with his landlord. Nevertheless, he was happy to have found a place to live.<sup>7</sup>
17. Living in Cannington meant that Parbhat still had to travel to and from work in his hire car, which was expensive. As a result, he looked for more work and found a job in a café south of the river. After juggling both jobs for about three months, working at the café in the mornings and at Rodney's bar at night, he gave in his notice at Rodney's bar. He told his manager at Rodney's he was getting long shifts at his new job at the café and was finding it too hard to juggle both jobs. Parbhat's manager told police the staff at Rodney's were sad to see Parbhat leave. They had enjoyed working with him as he was "very skilled, easy to work with, loyal and honest."<sup>8</sup>
18. Parbhat then found a new place to live in Bull Creek. He replied to a Facebook marketplace advertisement and arranged to rent a room at the home. He moved into the house in Bull Creek on 30 June 2024. Parbhat told the landlord that he was a chef and he also worked in the security and construction industry, but at the time he moved in he was not currently employed and was looking for a new job. There is evidence to indicate Parbhat had lost his job at the café as he failed to turn up for work. This was surprising, as his previous employer had valued him highly as a hard-working and reliable employee. It seems likely Parbhat's mental health was deteriorating around this time, which may have led to his change in work behaviour.
19. Parbhat kept to himself after he moved in and rarely interacted with his landlord, so they did not get to know each other. The landlord told police that Parbhat mostly stayed in his room and appeared to be drinking alcohol heavily. The landlord did speak to him once about his heavy alcohol consumption and Parbhat told him "he was enjoying the holidays before starting work again."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 6.

<sup>7</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 4.

<sup>8</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 5 [31].

<sup>9</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 5 [9].

20. This was supported by his bank accounts, which showed he was making regular purchases of alcohol and getting food home delivered. With no income and excessive spending on takeaway food and alcohol, Parbhat's bank balance had dwindled to the point he was overdrawn in one bank account and had only \$2 left in his other bank account in August 2024, when he disappeared.<sup>10</sup>

### **EVENTS LEADING TO PARBHAT'S DISAPPEARANCE**

21. Parbhat travelled to Albany prior to his death. He still paid his rent on 22 July 2024 and sent through a screenshot of the bank payment to his landlord. His landlord asked him why he hadn't seen him around the house, and Parbhat responded that he was in Albany looking for a construction traffic management job, but that he would be back in Perth the following week. That was the last time Parbhat had any communication with his landlord. His rent was paid until 5 August 2024.
22. The police investigation later established that Parbhat was seen sleeping in his car at night at various locations in Albany, including a service station in Little Grove and in the carpark outside a store.<sup>11</sup>
23. On 6 August 2024, when his rent became due again, the landlord sent a WhatsApp message to Parbhat and asked why he hadn't come home? He also reminded Parbhat in the message that his rent was due. The message was not delivered and the landlord did not hear from Parbhat again. The landlord later found out from a message on Facebook on 9 August 2024 that Parbhat had gone missing in Albany at that time.<sup>12</sup>

### **LAST KNOWN SIGHTING OF PARBHAT**

24. Parbhat was 24 years old at the time of his disappearance. He was 188 cm tall and was of medium build. He had short black hair, dark eyes, olive skin and a beard.<sup>13</sup> The evidence suggests that by early August 2024, Parbhat had still not been successful finding work in Albany and he was living in his rental car to conserve funds. There is evidence to indicate he stayed in carparks in town before eventually parking in the carpark of The Gap and Natural Bridge (The Gap) in Torndirrup National Park.<sup>14</sup>
25. The Torndirrup National Park is large, at over 4020 hectares in size, and includes a number of recreation sites for visitors and tourists, including The Gap. The Gap recreation site was redeveloped in 2016 and it has become a significant tourism

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<sup>10</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

<sup>11</sup> T 9 – 10.

<sup>12</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 5.

<sup>13</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 3; Exhibit 2.

<sup>14</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 10.

attraction for Albany. The Gap is now the main recreation area within the park and it attracts over 600,000 visitors per year. I understand there has been interest expressed by commercial cruise liners to take passengers to The Gap when berthing in Albany, which will only increase the visitor numbers.<sup>15</sup>

26. Given the increase in attendances, in 2024 additional development work was occurring to expand the car park area and to construct a toilet for visitors. There are further construction works also planned in the future to develop a walking trail between the Gap and a nearby lighthouse, although these are yet to occur.<sup>16</sup>
27. The construction works related to the carpark and toilet were occurring at The Gap at the time of Parbhat's disappearance. The works manager for the site, Mark Semple, had been working in the area for about two and a half months in early August 2024.<sup>17</sup>
28. On Monday, 5 August 2024, Mr Semple arrived at The Gap at around 11.30 am. Mr Semple parked next to a blue Kia. Mr Semple had not seen the car there before. Mr Semple looked inside the Kia and noticed a male was sitting inside, who matched Parbhat's description. I am satisfied the male he saw was Parbhat. Mr Semple recalled Parbhat was hunched forward with a blanket wrapped around him. From his body language it looked to Mr Semple like Parbhat was upset. Mr Semple got out of his car to go and check on his workers. As he passed the car, he stooped down towards Parbhat and said, "Are you right mate?" He told police Parbhat gave him a quick look and then looked away and stared down at the ground. Mr Semple felt sorry for him and assumed he was annoying him, so he left Parbhat alone.<sup>18</sup>
29. Mr Semple returned to his car about four and a half hours later. He noticed the blue Kia was still there and Parbhat, who had previously been sitting in the driver's seat upright, had now reclined the driver's seat and was lying back on it, facing Mr Semple's car. Mr Semple again stooped down as he walked past the Kia and asked if he was alright by giving a 'thumbs up' sign. In response, Parbhat simply rolled over and looked the other way. Mr Semple "thought something was going on with him"<sup>19</sup> but recognised he didn't want to engage. As Mr Semple stood up to leave, he noticed there was food and other materials inside the vehicle. He formed the impression Parbhat was "doing it a bit rough by living in his car."<sup>20</sup> Mr Semple got back into his vehicle and left the area.
30. Mr Semple returned to the same carpark at The Gap the next day, being Tuesday, 6 August 2024, at around 11.00 am. He parked his car in the same spot, next to the

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<sup>15</sup> Exhibit 2.

<sup>16</sup> Exhibit 2.

<sup>17</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7; Exhibit 2.

<sup>18</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7.

<sup>19</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7 [24].

<sup>20</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7 [25].

same blue Kia vehicle. Mr Semple looked inside the Kia and noted the driver's seat was still in the reclined position but there was no one in the vehicle. Mr Semple was concerned for Parbhat. He noticed some people nearby and checked to see if any of them returned to the car, but none of them did. Mr Semple got out of his car and checked the Kia to see if there was a note on it to indicate where Parbhat might have gone, but there was no note. He then checked the doors and found them to be locked. Mr Semple walked to the work site and spoke to his workers to check if any of them had seen Parbhat. None of them had seen him, or even noticed the car there.<sup>21</sup>

31. Mr Semple was sufficiently concerned that he then returned to his car and called police to alert them to his concerns for the male driver of the Kia, who appeared to be missing.<sup>22</sup>

### THE SEARCH

32. The call from Mr Semple was received by WA Police at 12.21 pm on Tuesday, 6 August 2024. Police officers were quickly dispatched to the scene as The Gap is well known by locals to be a place where people take their lives by jumping from the cliff top into the treacherous seas below, and the information from Mr Semple suggested Parbhat may have been feeling despondent when he was last seen by him. It is also a very isolated spot, so if Parbhat had simply got lost in the area or had an accident, his life could be imminently at risk.<sup>23</sup>
33. Senior Constable Fazio explained that while The Gap is visited by many tourists who come to Albany, and visitors who use the purposely built viewing platform/jetty are generally very safe, there is a rocky outcrop on the opposite side from the platform that is highly dangerous, especially at nighttime, as the cliff edge is not clearly visible and there is a 40 metre drop to the water below.<sup>24</sup>
34. Mr Semple stayed with the car until the police officers arrived. Senior Constable Jake Bird and Senior Constable David Johnson from Albany Police Station arrived quickly. Mr Semple directed them to the Kia and watched them smash one of the windows to the car to gain access to the interior. He then left them and returned to his work site.<sup>25</sup>
35. The police officers searched the vehicle and located Parbhat's Indian Passport and Parbhat's wallet, which contained various bank and identification cards. This led them to suspect Parbhat was the person who had been seen in the Kia and was now

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<sup>21</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7.

<sup>22</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7.

<sup>23</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9.

<sup>24</sup> T 6 – 7.

<sup>25</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 7.

missing. There was no mobile telephone located in the car and the car keys were also not in the car, suggesting Parbhat had locked the car and taken them with him.<sup>26</sup>

36. WA Police officers made enquiries about the ownership of the Kia Cerrato, which led to the information that Parbhat had rented it from the owner in Perth. The owner told police he had not had any recent contact with Parbhat. Automatic recognition cameras had captured the vehicle travelling from Perth to Albany on the evening of 17 July 2024 and the last time it had been captured on an automatic recognition camera was at 6.16 pm on 27 July 2024, when it was parked outside the front of McDonalds in Albany. Police enquiries also established Parbhat had been stopped in the Kia by local police for a random breath test just before midnight on 28 July 2024. He tested negative. Parbhat told the police officers at the time that he was living in his car whilst in Albany.<sup>27</sup>
37. Senior Constable Fazio reviewed the body worn camera footage from this traffic stop as part of his investigation into Parbhat's later disappearance. Senior Constable Fazio observed that Parbhat appeared alright and answered all the questions put to him without raising any concern that he posed a risk to himself. Senior Constable Fazio indicated the officer who spoke to Parbhat is an experienced police officer and he held no concerns for Parbhat's welfare at the time he spoke to him. It appeared that he was simply living in his car as money was tight, which is not uncommon in a tourist town like Albany. Senior Constable Fazio indicated the police officer was shocked when he was informed of later events involving Parbhat.<sup>28</sup>
38. Police officers in Perth were sent to Parbhat's previous home address in Cannington, as that was his last recorded address. The landlord confirmed Parbhat had moved out a few months before.<sup>29</sup>
39. With all evidence pointing to Parbhat having gone missing in the area around The Gap, a search was quickly commenced. Sergeant Vaughan Mackay was appointed the Police Forward Commander for the search for Parbhat. Parbhat was deemed a missing person, having last been seen the afternoon before, and given the location, search considerations were made around the possibility Parbhat had entered the water, or alternatively was lost, injured or despondent on land. It was noted that there had been rain, so it was likely tracks would have been washed away.<sup>30</sup>
40. Sergeant Mackay arrived at The Gap at 2.00 pm and consulted with Senior Constable Bird and Senior Constable Johnson. Senior Constable Johnson handed him Parbhat's Passport and wallet, which supported their conclusion Parbhat

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<sup>26</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 10.

<sup>27</sup> Exhibit 1, Tabs 9 to 11.

<sup>28</sup> T 17.

<sup>29</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 9

<sup>30</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 10.

was the man Mr Semple had seen in the Kia. Sergeant Mackay noted the car had a blanket, food and alcohol containers inside, indicative of Parbhat having been living in the vehicle. This is consistent with the information he had provided to police a week or so prior when stopped for breath testing.<sup>31</sup>

41. Sergeant Mackay arranged for more police to attend the location and undertake an immediate 300 metre radius foot search of the land near the carpark in an attempt to locate Parbhat. The search failed to locate any sign of Parbhat. Sergeant Mackay asked the Officer in Charge of Albany Police Station make requests for assistance from Police Air Wing and the Albany Volunteer Marine Rescue so a marine search could be commenced, while the land search continued. Some of the Volunteer Marine Rescue personnel began to search the water soon after from Peake Head to The Gap.<sup>32</sup>
42. Parbhat's mobile telephone number was identified and the WA Police State Operations Command Centre Inspector authorised triangulation of Parbhat's mobile phone, to see if he could be located that way. The triangulation attempt indicated that his phone had been out of service for over 72 hrs. Inquiries into his WhatsApp account also confirmed there had been no activity since the early evening on 5 August 2024.<sup>33</sup>
43. At 4.38 pm, Sergeant David Costello took over from Sergeant Mackay as the Police Forward Command and the search wound down for the night, although police officers remained at the site overnight in case Parbhat returned to his vehicle. National park rangers were contacted and they indicated they had not had any contact with Parbhat in the previous two weeks. The national park was closed to the public while the search continued.<sup>34</sup>
44. The next morning, Sergeant Mackay resumed his role as Forward Commander at 7.00 am and continued to coordinate the search for Parbhat. State Emergency Services (SES) volunteers joined the land search on foot along with an SES tracker dog and a WA Police four wheel drive vehicle began to search the local beaches for any sign of Parbhat. An attempt was made to use a drone to search by air, but it had to be terminated due to the extreme winds. Volunteer Marine Rescue boats also had to withdraw from the search at around 9.30 am as the extreme weather and sea conditions were deemed too hazardous. An experienced Water Police officer, Sergeant Paul Crawshaw, was consulted about likely outcomes if Parbhat had gone into the water at The Gap. Sergeant Crawshaw indicated that it is possible a body going into the water there might never be recovered, due to the rocky conditions,

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<sup>31</sup> T 9; Exhibit 1, Tab 8.

<sup>32</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8.

<sup>33</sup> T 9; Exhibit 1, Tab 9 and Tab 10.

<sup>34</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 10.

surge and water movement. However, he also provided drift patterns to assist with searching for Parbhat's body, if it remained on the surface.<sup>35</sup>

45. Sergeant Mackay conducted a media release at 11.10 am with a public appeal for any information in relation to Parbhat. No one came forward with any new sightings of Parbhat since the last sighting by Mr Semple that might assist the searchers with new areas to cover.<sup>36</sup>
46. At 1.20 pm, Sergeant Mackay was advised that the SES tracker dog was indicating towards a cliff edge at The Gap. The dog's handler told police that the dog had detected a strong scent from Parbhat's vehicle and had followed it from the carpark, stopping briefly at a picnic table, then tracking strongly to the cliff edge at way point. The handler indicated the scent was strong, despite the poor weather conditions, and the dog had provided good direction with minimal deviation but the scent disappeared at the cliff edge. Nothing else of significance was noted or found and the searchers finished searching for the day at around 4.30 pm.<sup>37</sup>
47. The search recommenced for a third day on Thursday, 8 August 2024. A foot search of the land continued, including along the main road from The Gap back to Frenchman Bay Road and up to Cave Point Lighthouse. Nothing relating to Parbhat was found. A drone was used to search the bushland by air, but nothing of interest was identified. Police Airwing also assisted in searching the coastline from the air and boats went out to search the water and shoreline. At the end of that day, with nothing of interest connected to Parbhat having been found, the search was suspended.<sup>38</sup>
48. In making the decision to suspend the search, police had consulted a medical expert who has considerable experience in estimating survivability in varied conditions, Dr Paul Luckin. Dr Luckin was consulted on 7 August 2024. He had advised that if Parbhat had gone over the cliff edge, he would have already been deceased at the time the search commenced, as he would not have survived a fall from that height. If he was still on land, he might have still been alive. However, by the time the land search was concluded, searchers had covered a significant percentage of the land area where Parbhat might have gone, without any sign of him. Further, the information that he had appeared despondent, had not used his phone and had not returned to his car made it very unlikely he was still alive. The evidence pointed to Parbhat having gone for a walk sometime after 6.00 pm on the evening of 5 August 2024 and either fallen or deliberately gone over the cliff edge in the dark.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> T 7 – 8; Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 10.

<sup>36</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8.

<sup>37</sup> T 7 - 8; Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 10.

<sup>38</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8, Tab 10 and Tab 12.

<sup>39</sup> T 7 - 9; Exhibit 1, Tab 10.

49. Parbhat's cousin in Melbourne, Rahul, and his parents in India were notified on 7 August 2024 that Parbhat was believed to be missing. In response Rahul travelled to Albany to be the family contact. On Friday, 9 August 2024, Acting Inspector Correia met with Rahul and other family representatives in Albany. They were taken to The Gap by police and the extent of the search was explained to them and why the decision to suspend the search the previous day had been made.<sup>40</sup>

### **IS PARBHAT DECEASED?**

50. Senior Constable Fazio provided some evidence at the inquest about the paperwork found in Parbhat's car, which included his passport and identification documentation, receipts for purchases and some documents relating to his visa. In the visa application he had made a comment regarding the lack of clarity around his application's status and the stress it was causing him. He mentioned his parents were unaware of his situation and it seems he was concerned they would be disappointed if he failed to succeed in Australia in the way they had hoped he would. He had been sending home money when he was working, and that was also something he was no longer able to do at that time as he was struggling to pay his home and car rental without an income. Senior Constable Fazio gained the impression Parbhat felt he would be unable to return home to his small community in India if he failed to achieve success in Australia and fulfil the expectations of his family.<sup>41</sup>
51. Senior Constable Fazio also believed there was evidence to suggest the assault had significantly impacted upon Parbhat's mental health, particularly given its impact upon his employment and finances, and it may have contributed to his excessive drinking. He formed the view the assault, his loss of income and cessation of his studies (which might impact his visa status) in combination may well have led him to spiral downwards mentally.<sup>42</sup>
52. Senior Constable Fazio confirmed that Parbhat has not been in contact with his relatives in Australia or India since 5 August 2024. In addition, 'proof of life' checks, including checks with Australian Border Force to confirm he has not left the country and banking institutions and social media account to confirm he has not been active, all support the conclusion Parbhat died in early August 2024.<sup>43</sup>
53. After reviewing all the evidence related to Parbhat's disappearance, Senior Constable Fazio expressed the opinion Parbhat died on the evening of 5 August 2024 after walking to the cliff edge at The Gap and falling into the sea below. Senior Constable Fazio suggested there was insufficient evidence available to determine whether he

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<sup>40</sup> Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 10.

<sup>41</sup> T 10 - 11.

<sup>42</sup> T 11,

<sup>43</sup> T 12.

intentionally went over the edge, intending to end his life, or if Parbhat accidentally slipped and fell in the dark.<sup>44</sup>

54. Police have obtained DNA swabs from some of the items left behind in Parbhat's vehicle, and also familial DNA comparison samples, so if Parbhat's remains are ever located they will be able to be identified.<sup>45</sup>
55. After careful consideration of the available evidence, I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Parbhat is deceased and that he died when he fell from the cliff's edge at The Gap into the sea on the evening of 5 August 2024 or in the early hours of the morning on 6 August 2024.
56. There is insufficient evidence for me to determine the cause of Parbhat's death, as he may have died as a result of an injury sustained in the fall or from drowning after falling into the sea.
57. Some additional information was provided to the Court by Mr Suresh Rajan, who is an active advocate on multicultural issues in Western Australia, including being a spokesman for the Ethic Communities Council of Western Australian in 2024. Mr Rajan was also awarded the WA Government's Senior of the Year Award for the Metropolitan region for his service to the community and I am aware he is actively engaged in advocating for Indian families who have experienced loss in connection with the health system. Mr Suresh Rajan wrote to the Court following the inquest to provide some cultural context around suicide amongst Indian and South Asian communities in case it may assist me in considering the circumstances of this case.<sup>46</sup>
58. Mr Rajan explained the most common methods for taking one's life in these communities are not consistent with the manner in which it appears Parbhat lost his life. However, Mr Rajan did indicate that he is aware the rate of suicide in India, where Parbhat originated, is high because an individual in a very populous country, the importance of self may seem less significant. Further, the practice of Hinduism instils a belief in reincarnation, so removal from one cycle of life is viewed perhaps less final when it is believed that the cycle of life will continue to another stage. To this extent, Mr Rajan believes that suicide in these cultures can to some extent be normalised. Mr Rajan's insights into some of the cultural factors that may have impacted upon Parbhat's mental state have assisted me in considering the likelihood that Parbhat had an intention to end his life when he fell from the clifftop.<sup>47</sup>
59. The weight of the evidence before me supports the conclusion Parbhat died by way of suicide. There is a significant amount of evidence to suggest Parbhat was at a

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<sup>44</sup> T 12 – 13.

<sup>45</sup> T 12.

<sup>46</sup> Exhibit 3

<sup>47</sup> Exhibit 3.

moment of crisis at that time. He had no income or savings and was unable to make his next rent or car hire repayments, which were due at the time he went missing. He was also worried that his student visa might soon be cancelled and he would then be required to return home to India, where he would feel disgrace for not having succeeded in his new life in Australia. He was drinking alcohol heavily, which is known to be a depressant, and the last person to see him alive thought he looked despondent. He had been at The Gap in the daytime and had walked to the edge safely and returned that evening based upon the CCTV footage, so he would have been aware of the dangers of going to the cliff edge in the dark. On the balance of probabilities, I am satisfied Parbhat died by way of suicide.

### **SUGGESTED SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS**

60. The dangers in the area of The Gap and Natural Bridge in Torndirrup National Park are well known to locals. It is unfortunately a notorious spot for people to choose to take their own life, and it also presents risks to those unfamiliar with the area, even if they are not contemplating thoughts of self-harm.
61. As the coronial investigating officer for the Albany Police Station, Senior Constable Fazio has spent considerable time investigating not only long-term missing persons, but also the many cases of accident and sad instances of suicide in the greater Albany region. Given Parbhat's sudden death occurred at The Gap, Senior Constable Fazio gave some thought to whether any improvements could be made at this well-known spot to improve safety for the many people who go there, whether with suicidal ideation or just to view the natural wonders of the area.
62. The park is not closed at night and Senior Constable Fazio is aware there are locals and tourists who go there in the early hours of the morning and late at night. Senior Constable Fazio gave evidence that lighting in the area is very poor, which means it is not a safe area for visitors at night, particularly those unfamiliar with the risks. Senior Constable Fazio suggested that a simple solution might be for the relevant managing agency, DBCA, to install some solar lights to illuminate the pathway from the carpark to the bridge itself, to keep people visiting in the dark on the path. Senior Constable Fazio also expressed the opinion the carpark itself would benefit from improved lighting as it is quite dark.<sup>48</sup>
63. Senior Constable Fazio also suggested DBCA consider installing an additional CCTV camera in the carpark area, as currently there is only one camera *in situ* at that location. That camera points towards the bridge, but there is a blind side not captured by the camera near the walkway side. There is a pay booth in that location, and it was suggested that installing another camera at the pay booth would allow capture of the

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<sup>48</sup> T 13.

rear of the carpark, into a new extended parking area, and the area of The Gap opposite the viewing platform. Senior Constable Fazio noted that in this case Parbhat was largely out of view of the cameras for most of the lengthy period of time he was parked at The Gap carpark. Increased lighting in the area would also help the vision captured on the cameras.<sup>49</sup>

64. There is a camera installed that has the capability for Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology to recognise car registration plates, which is the first port of call for police when conducting a welfare check in the area. However, Senior Constable Fazio believes the capability for ANPR has not been enabled and he has found the camera has not always been working correctly. Senior Constable Fazio suggested it may simply require more consistent maintenance. With accurate ANPR, police are able to quickly identify if a person of interest's car is in the area, which can allow swifter attendance of emergency services if required. If a person stayed too long in the area, or there was footage that raised a concern about a person's state of mind, the police could also use that information to prompt a general patrol in the area, rather than simply relying upon information volunteered by concerned members of the public, as occurred in this case.<sup>50</sup>
65. Finally, Senior Constable Fazio suggested the area would benefit from the installation of a telephone with a push button directly connected to a suicide hotline, such as that provided by Lifeline, so those people who go to The Gap while experiencing suicidal thoughts can easily reach out for help and support during their moment of crisis. This can create a window of opportunity for other help to physically arrive in the area, even if the conversation itself is not enough to dissuade a suicidal person from their planned course of action. While there is information about Lifeline signposted on the drive out to The Gap and Natural Bridge, along with signage about the treacherous coastline and other dangers in the area such as for rock fishers at Salmon Holes, the phone would provide an easy way for troubled people to reach out in their time of crisis. Senior Constable Fazio stated in evidence that he considered this to be the single most important recommendation, from a death prevention perspective, that I ought to consider.<sup>51</sup>
66. Senior Constable Fazio observed that the other improvements would also benefit people who are simply interested in visiting the area but are perhaps less alert to the dangers. It would assist emergency services when searching for missing people as there would be much clearer evidence of what had occurred, assisting to focus a search on the correct area from an early stage.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> T 13 – 14; Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

<sup>50</sup> T 13 – 14, 17; Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

<sup>51</sup> T 13 – 15; Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

<sup>52</sup> T 15; Exhibit 1, Tab 3.

67. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) is the responsible agency for the management of Torndirrup National Park. Following the inquest hearing, Mr Stuart Smith, the Director General of DBCA, provided some additional information to the Court about The Gap and Natural Bridge and also provided some comments on the proposed possible recommendations arising from Senior Constable Fazio's evidence<sup>53</sup>
68. I am advised by the Director General, Mr Smith, that DBCA has previously supported community-led suicide prevention strategies, including the installation of CCTV cameras at The Gap in conjunction with the City of Albany and WA Police. The suicide prevention signage directed people in crisis to Lifeline, referred to in Senior Constable Fazio's evidence, was installed by DBCA on the entry road into the Gap, in addition to similar suicide prevention signage installed by the City of Albany along Frenchmans Bay Road, which takes visitors to the national park.<sup>54</sup>
69. Given the City of Albany has a role to play in some of the suggested recommendations and has previously worked with DBCA on safety improvements at the Gap, input was also sought from the City of Albany. Information was provided to the Court on 12 February 2026 in that regard, which I have also taken into account in considering what recommendations, if any, should be made in relation to lessons learned from Parbhat's death.<sup>55</sup>
70. In relation to the proposed recommendations, DBCA and the City of Albany submit as follows:<sup>56</sup>

**Increased lighting (solar)**

71. DBCA's visitor risk assessments indicate that increased visitation during low-light conditions may elevate safety risks, particularly in cliff-edge environments. The concern is that additional lighting at the location may potentially draw more people to the location, and hence significantly increase the risk profile of the location as more people are visiting it in the dark. Further, there is a concern that better lighting will encourage illegal camping activities, overnight partying, and other anti-social behaviour. DBCA also advises the existing design of the lookouts, walkways and other infrastructure at the location is not designed for the installation of lighting. As there is no mains power available at the location, any additional lighting would need to be solar-powered and sufficiently robust to be suitable for installation in an outdoor environment that is regularly subject to harsh weather conditions and constant salt spray. The ongoing maintenance of such lighting would also create a

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<sup>53</sup> Exhibit 2.

<sup>54</sup> Exhibit 2.

<sup>55</sup> Email to S/C Robertson from Mr Catterall, Manager – IT, City of Albany, dated 12 February 2026.

<sup>56</sup> Exhibit 2; Email to S/C Robertson from Mr Catterall, Manager – IT, City of Albany, dated 12 February 2026.

resourcing issue for DBCA. It is also suggested consideration would need to be given to any potential impact upon wildlife, such as seabirds and migratory birds, and it is noted that the area is a well-known astrophotography area due to the absence of lighting. For these reasons, DBCA does not support the installation of additional lighting in the carpark, entrance road or walkway to the Gap platform.

72. I accept DBCA must balance various competing interests in ensuring that the park remains a protected biodiverse natural wonder as well as supporting safe visitor attendance, within resourcing constraints. Accordingly, while I can see the benefits from a safety perspective of additional lighting, I do not propose to make a recommendation for DBCA to install additional lighting for the carpark area for the reasons outlined by DBCA.

### **Second CCTV camera and ability for ANPR**

73. DBCA advised the CCTV infrastructure currently installed at The Gap is managed by the local council authority, the City of Albany. Therefore, DBCA's role in the installation of any additional camera would be limited to facilitating access and ensuring compatibility with existing site infrastructure. DBCA does observe the existing infrastructure is not designed to support any additional structures, so there may be significant logistical issues in installing another camera, and there is continual exposure to the elements to consider.
74. As the CCTV infrastructure is managed by the City of Albany, DBCA also indicated that any improvement to allow ANPR in the camera that points along The Gap road is a matter for the City of Albany to consider. However, the Court was advised DBCA had met with the City of Albany and was informed the council was investigating the camera's ability to support ANPR or whether upgrades to the software or camera were required.
75. The City of Albany has recently advised it is able to commit to replacing the road facing CCTV camera only (not the platform facing camera) with an ANPR type camera that is compatible with WA Police's centralized ANPR recording system by the end of this financial year (30 June 2026) and then facilitate its connected to the WA Police's centralized ANPR system. The City of Albany also advised within the same timeframe it anticipates replacing the 4G communication equipment with a dedicated Starlink internet connection, which will improve the quality of the images that are streamed and recorded.
76. Given how far this matter has progressed, I do not consider it necessary to make a recommendation on this issue, and I simply encourage DBCA and City of Albany to work with WA Police to ensure the changes are implemented as currently planned.

### **Installation of Suicide Hotline telephone**

77. DBCA expressed ‘in principle’ support for the installation of a Suicide Hotline telephone at the location, following wider consultation with key stakeholders across the community and the public health sectors. Any proposed infrastructure would need to be funded and managed by the relevant community health service provider, but DBCA is open to collaborating with relevant stakeholders to support the assessment, feasibility and appropriate placement of such infrastructure. Any such phone system would also need to be able to withstand the harsh conditions at The Gap and would need to be solar powered and reliant on mobile phone coverage.
78. In the meantime, DBCA indicated it would undertake a review of the existing suicide prevention signage at the location to ensure the signage reflects current suicide prevention messaging and support numbers in consultation with key stakeholders across the community and the public health sectors.
79. Further information was provided to the Court on 6 February 2026 by Mr Michael Phillips, Visitor Risk Management Coordinator for the Parks and Wildlife Service of DBCA, advising that DBCA has reviewed the existing signage at the location and believes no further signage is required at this stage. It was noted that the existing signage is in line with the City of Albany signage along Frenchman’s Bay Road and contains the correct phone number and information for Lifeline. All Lifeline signs are approximately 800mm x 600mm in size and are said to be placed in highly visible locations both on the entrance road to the Gap and on Frenchman Bay Road.<sup>57</sup>
80. I note in his submission to the Court, Mr Rajan commented that the hotline, while a positive initiative, would need to be trans cultural to ensure that it provides a service to people like Parbhat. Mr Suresh provided information about the lack of transcultural mental health services in Western Australia generally, which creates barriers for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to access mental health services. That is a complex problem that I understand will require the Department of Health to consult with people such as Mr Rajan to overcome, but I mention it now so that it is considered an essential part of any consultation process.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Email to S/C Robertson from Mr Phillips, DBCA, dated 6 February 2026.

<sup>58</sup> Exhibit 3.

RECOMMENDATION

**I recommend the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions consult with relevant stakeholders, including the WA Country Health Service and/or Department of Health WA and Telstra, to consider the feasibility of the installation of a suicide hotline telephone at the Gap.**

CONCLUSION

81. Parbhat was a young international student who had come to Australia from India. He had been working and studying in Australia for some time prior to his disappearance. Initially, he appeared to have transitioned well to life in this new country, living with his cousin in Melbourne. He had completed some qualifications and was a well-regarded worker. However, it appears things became complicated after Parbhat moved to Perth and was assaulted on his way home from work. He changed jobs and residence, but he lost his new job when he became unreliable, which was a significant shift in his previous work habits. It seems his mental state was worsening, likely contributed to by increased alcohol use in the context of unresolved trauma.
82. In the past, Parbhat had been able to send money home, but his savings slowly dwindled after he lost his employment. After he stopped attending his studies, he was at risk of losing his student visa and might have felt he would have to return home in disgrace. He tried to find a new career in traffic management and travelled to Albany in the hope of finding work, but it seems he was unsuccessful, and he was last known to be living in his car with no job and the likely prospect of being unable to meet his rent and car rental commitments in the near future. Things must have felt quite hopeless for Parbhat at the time he spent his last nights at The Gap and sadly, it appears in that state of mind and while drinking alcohol, he made the fatal decision to jump from The Gap and end his life.
83. Parbhat's death has highlighted the need to consider what information is available at the Gap to ensure that all opportunities are presented to support people who are thinking of self-harm, knowing that often it only takes some small intervention to divert people from acting on these thoughts at any given moment. I acknowledge the WA Police, DBCA and City of Albany have been proactive in taking steps to try to prevent suicides at the Gap, as well as consider overall safety for visitors to this natural wonder, and I am confident these agencies will continue to work cooperatively to put into effect further safety improvements in the future. Sadly, it is unlikely to prevent all such deaths in the future, but best efforts must continue to be made.



SH Linton  
Acting State Coroner  
13 March 2026