
JURISDICTION : CORONER'S COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
ACT : CORONERS ACT 1996
CORONER : SARAH HELEN LINTON, DEPUTY STATE CORONER
HEARD : 11 MAY 2021
DELIVERED : 28 MAY 2021
FILE NO/S : CORC 72 of 2019
DECEASED : MCGOWAN, GLENYCE RAE

Catchwords:

Nil

Legislation:

Nil

Counsel Appearing:

Sgt A Becker 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, Deputy State Coroner, having investigated the disappearance of **Glenyce Rae McGowan** with an inquest held at the **Perth Coroner’s Court, Court 85, CLC Building, 501 Hay Street, Perth** on 11 May 2021, find that the death of **Glenyce Rae McGowan** has been established beyond all reasonable doubt and that the identity of the deceased person was **Glenyce Rae McGowan** and that death occurred on or about **10 December 1975** at **Nanutarra** as a result of an unknown cause in the following circumstances:*

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INTRODUCTION

1. In December 1975, Glenyce Rae McGowan was travelling up north to visit a friend in Tom Price. She never made it to Tom Price. Glenyce disappeared from the Nanutarra Roadhouse on 10 December 1975 and has never been seen nor heard from again.
2. Glenyce, who was only 19 years old, was reported missing by her parents on 19 December 1975. She is still recorded by the WA Police as a missing person, 45 years after her disappearance. Her body has never been discovered, but police investigations point to Glenyce having died on or about the day she first went missing.
3. On the basis of the information provided by the WA Police in relation to Glenyce's disappearance, the former Deputy State Coroner determined that pursuant to s 23 of the *Coroners Act 1996 (WA)*, there was reasonable cause to suspect that Glenyce had died and her death was a reportable death. The former Deputy State Coroner therefore made a direction that a coroner hold an inquest into the circumstances of the suspected death.¹
4. I held an inquest at the Perth Coroner's Court on 11 May 2021. The inquest consisted of the tendering of documentary evidence compiled through various police investigations conducted into Glenyce's disappearance, as well as hearing evidence from:
 - Detective Senior Sergeant Jarrad Doherty, who prepared the investigation report for the coroner on behalf of the Cold Case Homicide Squad;
 - Glenyce's friend Patricia Thomson, who Glenyce was going to visit on that fateful trip; and
 - Trevor McGowan, Glenyce's brother and last surviving member of her immediate family.
5. I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Glenyce died around the time of her disappearance. Her death was likely due to foul play, but there is insufficient evidence for me to be able to be satisfied of a cause or manner of death. I explain the reasons for this conclusion below.

BACKGROUND

6. Glenyce was 19 years old in December 1975. She was the second child of Barnett (Barney) and Violet (Peg) McGowan. At the time of her disappearance she usually lived with her parents in Medina.²
7. Glenyce was described by her mother as a "good family girl and fairly reliable."³ She worked as a childcare worker at a childcare centre in South Perth and she was said to

¹ Section 23 *Coroners Act* Direction of Deputy State Coroner Vicker dated 19 March 2019.

² Exhibit 1, Tab 19.

³ Exhibit 1, Tab 19 [6].

enjoy her job. She lived a simple life, making a lot of her own clothes and driving a car registered to her father. She was a friendly girl but somewhat shy. Her closest friend was Patricia Thomson.⁴

8. Patricia and Glenyce lived in the same street in Medina growing up and, although Glenyce was a couple of years older than Patricia and they were in different school years, they quickly became best friends. In their high school years they went on different paths, but remained close friends and still saw each other most nights and on weekends. Patricia indicated they “would share everything and had no secrets from each other.”⁵
9. Patricia and Glenyce would often go out together to the beach, shopping and visiting friends. Glenyce had left school and was working at the Child Care Centre by this time. Glenyce told Patricia she loved working at the centre, as she loved working with little children, and she appeared to be good at her job and was earning a good wage. Glenyce also had a boyfriend at this time. Patricia recalled the boyfriend used illicit drugs and Glenyce would sometimes use cannabis or LSD if he offered it to her, although she was not a regular user.⁶
10. Patricia remembers Glenyce as someone who had a happy disposition and was a lot of fun to be around.⁷ Importantly in the context of this inquest, Patricia also remembers Glenyce as a very relaxed person who was very trusting and naïve.⁸ She “lacked that sixth sense that tells you when there is something wrong.”⁹ This included not sensing that someone was “a bit creepy”¹⁰ in Patricia’s words.
11. Patricia also recalls that Glenyce had “a beautiful relationship” with her parents, whom she loved very much. They were very close and Patricia particularly remembered Glenyce’s “ability to talk to her parents about all manner of things that [she] wouldn’t talk to [her] parents about.”¹¹
12. Glenyce also had a very good sibling relationship with her older brother Trevor, despite the age difference, and Patricia knew that Glenyce loved her brother.¹²
13. Patricia moved to Tom Price with her family in about August 1974. In January 1975, Patricia became engaged and they came to Perth, in part to buy a ring. Whilst in Perth, Patricia saw Glenyce a number of times. Glenyce was still seeing her boyfriend at this time. This holiday was the last time that Patricia saw Glenyce in person. After returning to Tom Price, Patricia kept in contact with Glenyce by mail. At some stage, they had an argument and stopped corresponding for a time. They only began corresponding again when Patricia sent Glenyce a wedding invitation.

⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 19.

⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [31].

⁶ T 26.

⁷ T 24.

⁸ T 24.

⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [70].

¹⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [71].

¹¹ T 25.

¹² T 26.

The wedding took place in September 1975 but Glenyce was unable to attend. She sent a message that she couldn't come, but sent her love.¹³

14. A statement from Stephen Leach suggests that around this time Glenyce was working up north for a time in a prawn factory near Carnarvon and living temporarily with Mr Leach. She then travelled with Mr Leach up to Darwin in early September 1975. On the way, Glenyce suggested they go to Tom Price (probably to visit Patricia), but Mr Leach felt it was too far off the beaten track so they did not. From Darwin, Glenyce flew back to her parents' home in Medina. Mr Leach saw Glenyce when he was back in Perth in November 1975 and for the last time in early December 1975. At that time, she mentioned that she might go to Queensland, without any further detail.¹⁴
15. Based upon his personal knowledge of Glenyce, Mr Leach expressed the view that if she met a man and she took a liking to him while 'hitch hiking' he felt she would be open to camping with him while travelling. He did not know her as a drug user and only ever knew her to smoke cigarettes, although they were of the 'roll your own' variety.¹⁵
16. It seems that after missing the wedding while travelling with Mr Leach, Glenyce decided to go and visit Patricia, who was pregnant with her first child. Patricia knew that Glenyce would be very excited about her pregnancy.¹⁶ In early December 1975 Patricia received a telegram from Glenyce advising that she was coming to visit her. The message was brief, and contained words to the effect that she was arriving on a particular date. Patricia was excited and began to plan for Glenyce's arrival.¹⁷ The plan appears to have been that Glenyce was going to visit Patricia in mid-December and return home to her parents by Christmas.¹⁸

THE TRIP TO TOM PRICE

17. Glenyce had arranged to travel to Tom Price with one of her brother, Trevor's friends. John Coman, who was only a year older than Glenyce, had been told by a friend that Glenyce was looking for a lift to Tom Price. He was planning to drive to his parents' home in Port Hedland. He was willing to take Glenyce with him in the hope that she could share the petrol costs.¹⁹
18. Mr Coman had not met Glenyce before. He rang and spoke to Glenyce on 7 December 1975 to discuss sharing the journey. She told him she would speak to her brother Trevor in order to, in effect, see if Trevor could vouch for him. She asked him to call her back at 6.00 pm that night. John Coman rang Glenyce back at

¹³ T 27; Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

¹⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 22.

¹⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 22.

¹⁶ T 27.

¹⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

¹⁸ T 29.

¹⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 7A - 7C.

6.00 pm and she said she would go with him. They arranged to meet in Kings Park at the floral clock the following day.²⁰

19. Glenyce took only a few belongings with her, including a borrowed sleeping bag, a handbag and a small haversack containing clothes, a book on how to play the clarinet and a gift for Patricia. Prior to leaving for Tom Price, Glenyce's father gave her \$500, which was quite a significant sum of money at that time. She appears to have banked the money, planning to use it to for the trip.²¹
20. After meeting on 8 December 1975, as arranged, they set off on their trip to Tom Price in Mr Coman's blue 1962 Falcon station wagon. The first day they picked up a hitchhiker in Gin Gin and gave him a lift to Geraldton. They then continued on with their journey, stopping in Northampton at about 10.00 pm. They slept in the car at the beach overnight.²²
21. The next day they continued driving north, stopping in Carnarvon for about three hours. While in Carnarvon, Glenyce withdrew \$40 from her bank account. She used some of the money to pay Mr Coman for petrol. She also bought some mugs and they filled up some empty flagons with water as a safety precaution in case they got stuck somewhere.²³

NANUTARRA ROADHOUSE

22. After leaving Carnarvon, they drove on to the Nanutarra Roadhouse. The Nanutarra Roadhouse is 355 km north-east of Carnarvon and 260 km south of Karratha. The closest town is Onslow, approximately 125 km away. The roadhouse is in an isolated position and generally is only utilised by passing traffic.²⁴
23. Mr Coman estimates they arrived at approximately 5.00 pm on 9 December 1975. They were advised on arrival that due to the impact of tropical cyclone Joan, which had caused widespread destruction and flooding in the region in the days before, the road to Tom Price was closed due to floods. It appears there may have been more people than usual at the roadhouse that day due to the closed roads.²⁵
24. Glenyce and Mr Coman slept in the car overnight. They had apparently intended to sleep outside the car but the ants on the ground caused them to change their minds. They spent the next morning at the Nanutarra Roadhouse and had a swim in the river.²⁶
25. When it became clear they would not be able to get to Tom Price for a few days, Mr Coman decided to head to Port Hedland directly instead. He asked Glenyce if she wanted to go with him to Port Hedland, but she declined. She told him that she

²⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 7A – 7C.

²¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 7A and Tab 19.

²² Exhibit 1, Tab 7A – C.

²³ Exhibit 1, Tab 4 and Tab 7A.

²⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 3.

²⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 7A – C.

²⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 and 7A – C.

would stay at Nanutarra and see if she could get a lift with someone else to Tom Price. If she was unsuccessful, she told him she would return to Perth.²⁷

26. Mr Coman left the Nanutarra Roadhouse at about lunchtime on 10 December 1975. At the time he left, Glenyce was seated outside the café at the roadhouse. She was wearing sandals, a long blue skirt and a cream Indian top, buttoned up at the front, which her parents had bought for her during their recent trip to Singapore.²⁸
27. This was the last time Mr Coman saw Glenyce. He continued on his journey towards Port Hedland, but due to flooding he eventually had to leave his car and fly to Port Hedland to reach his parents' home. He only became aware that Glenyce was missing on 19 December 1975 after her disappearance was reported to police. Police officers came to speak to him in Port Hedland and take a statement. Mr Coman cooperated with police and was very regretful when he was informed that she was missing. He wondered if he had stayed with her whether it might have changed the course of events, although it is impossible now to say if it would have made any difference.²⁹
28. Keith (Darby) Munroe, Karen Munroe and their two children had also been stranded at the Nanutarra Roadhouse that day due to the flooding. They were heading home to Tom Price in their brown Chrysler sedan when they stopped for petrol at Nanutarra and were told the road home was not passable due to flooding. They spent the day at the roadhouse and started talking to other people there, including Glenyce, who explained that she was planning to go to Tom Price to visit the Thomson family. Mr and Mrs Munroe knew the Thomsons as they were neighbours, so Mr and Mrs Munroe agreed to give Glenyce a lift to Tom Price the next day.³⁰
29. Mrs Munroe told Glenyce they planned to leave at first light the next day, being 11 December 1975, as they wanted to be the first ones on the road. Glenyce said she would camp down by the river next to the Munroes so that she could leave with them first thing in the morning.³¹
30. Mr Munroe recalls seeing Glenyce talking to Raymond Cunningham, who worked at the roadhouse. He saw them talking at the roadhouse and later down by the river's edge.³²
31. Rex Sumner was also stranded at the roadhouse that day on his journey to Paraburdoo to start a new job. He was travelling with his girlfriend (later wife), Irene Cunningham, in a yellow Kombi van and they arrived at the roadhouse at about 3.00 pm on the afternoon of 10 December 1975. When they heard the roads were closed, Mr Sumner drove his van to the river and parked under the bridge. Bevan Boldyn was parked in a brown Holden nearby. Mr Sumner saw a girl matching Glenyce's description sitting on some rocks near the water. At about 5.00 pm he saw

²⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 7A – C.

²⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 and Tab 7A – C.

²⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 7C.

³⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 9.

³¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 9.

³² Exhibit 1, Tab 8.

Glenyce talking to Mr Cunningham. They were talking and smoking together for about half an hour before Mr Cunningham left. After dinner, at about 8.30 pm, Mr Sumner, the Munroes and Mr Boldyn moved their three vehicles to higher ground beside the river, where they planned to sleep for the night.³³

32. Mr Sumner recalls hearing Mr Boldyn tell Glenyce at some stage to be ready at 6.00 am as everyone would be leaving then.³⁴

LAST CONFIRMED SIGHTINGS OF GLENYCE

33. Mr Munroe recalled that Glenyce came over just after dark and asked to borrow a torch. She then used the torch to get her sleeping bag and knapsack, which was about 100 feet from them. After collecting these items she walked up the river towards Tom Price. A witness recalled Mr Munroe asked Glenyce if she might feel safer if she moved closer to them, but she told him she was alright.³⁵ He did not see or hear from her again. She appeared quiet but in good spirits when he saw her last.³⁶
34. At about 9.00 pm Glenyce came over to Mr Sumner and Mr Boldyn and again asked to borrow a torch. Mr Boldyn lent her his torch and she returned it after a few minutes.³⁷
35. About half an hour later, at approximately 9.30 pm, Mr Sumner saw Mr Cunningham ride into the area on his motorcycle. He approached Mr Sumner and asked him if he knew where Glenyce was. Mr Sumner directed him to an area near a large tree on the west side of the bridge, where he had seen Glenyce walk to when she had borrowed the torch. Mr Cunningham drove off on his motorcycle in that direction.
36. Mrs Sumner recalled many years later that Glenyce and Mr Cunningham sat next to each other on the edge of the river talking and smoking. They were still together when Mrs Sumner went to bed.³⁸
37. Mr Sumner saw Mr Cunningham leave again on his motorcycle about 45 minutes later after he directed him down to where Glenyce was located. He saw Mr Cunningham was by himself on the motorcycle and he was trying to start the motorcycle as it kept stalling. Mr Boldyn also recalled Mr Cunningham leaving on his motorcycle at about this time, which was approximately 10.30 pm.³⁹
38. Mr Munroe also recalled that evening that Raymond Cunningham drove his motorcycle down to the river but did not see Glenyce with him. He heard the motorcycle return to the roadhouse at about midnight, which may suggest that either

³³ Exhibit 1, Tab 11A – B.

³⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 11A – B.

³⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 11C.

³⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 8.

³⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 11A – B.

³⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 11C.

³⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 10 and Tab 11A – B.

Mr Cunningham returned after Mr Sumner saw him leave at about 10.15 pm, or another motorcycle was in the area around midnight.⁴⁰

DISCOVERY THAT GLENYCE WAS MISSING

39. In the morning, the Munroes got up early, at about 5.00 am, to get ready to leave. Glenyce did not come to meet them, so Mr Munroe, together with Mr Sumner and Mr Boldyn, walked down to where she was supposed to be sleeping. There was no sign of Glenyce or her sleeping bag or belongings.⁴¹ They walked along the river about half a mile, looking for her and calling out her name, but there was no sign of Glenyce. Others joined in the search, but no one could find her. The Munroes could not find Glenyce near the river, so they went to the roadhouse to ask if she was there, but she was not.
40. Eventually, after being unable to find any sign of Glenyce or her belongings, it was assumed that she had got a lift with someone else and already left. The Munroes had waited approximately 45 minutes to an hour for her by this time and they decided they could not wait any longer and left the roadhouse to drive to Tom Price without her.⁴² The Sumners and Mr Boldyn also left. At that stage, it did not appear to any of the campers that anything bad had happened to Glenyce, so it did not occur to anyone to report her disappearance to police.
41. The Munroes, Sumners and Mr Boldyn all made it to Duck Creek, about an hour further towards Tom Price, but could not go any further as the road was flooded. They also couldn't return to the roadhouse as a creek they had passed earlier had risen and was now impassable. They ended up staying at Duck Creek for a few days, until the road was re-opened.⁴³
42. Patricia remembers significant flooding in the town of Tom Price at the time that Glenyce was due to arrive as a result of the cyclone. She was aware that the road from Nanutarra was closed and realised that Glenyce would need to wait out the flood waters or go around them. As it grew close to the date Glenyce was due to arrive, Patricia and her husband would drive out each day some distance from town to see if they could see any sign of Glenyce arriving. After a couple of days without any sign of Glenyce, Patricia became worried. She mentioned her concerns to her mother, but her mother reassured her.⁴⁴
43. However, as noted below, eventually Patricia's mother had a chance conversation with the Munroes, who had last seen Glenyce at the roadhouse on 10 December 1975, and it became clear that something had occurred.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 8.

⁴¹ Exhibit 1, Tab

⁴² Exhibit 1, Tab 8 and Tab 11A - B.

⁴³ Exhibit 1, Tab 11.

⁴⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

⁴⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

44. After the Munroes reached Tom Price, they did not do anything further about Glenyce for a number of days. About four days after their return to Tom Price, so more than a week after they last saw Glenyce at the roadhouse, it appears that word came through to Patricia Thomson's parents that Glenyce was supposed to have got a lift from Nanutarra to Tom Price but did not, and the Munroes became aware that Glenyce had never arrived. Mrs Munroe told them what had happened at Nanutarra. Patricia recalls as part of the conversation they were informed that Glenyce had been seen smoking marijuana with a boy from the roadhouse before she disappeared. The Thomsons contacted Glenyce's parents and Glenyce was reported missing at the Medina Police Station on 19 December 1975 by her parents.⁴⁶

INITIAL POLICE INVESTIGATION

45. Patricia indicated in her statement that she was concerned that things didn't happen very fast after Glenyce was reported missing and it seemed to take a long time before the police became involved or started making inquiries. She believes the police may have initially thought Glenyce was just a runaway and a drug user, in part because on one occasion when Patricia was interviewed, the police focussed solely on Glenyce's drug use and lifestyle, and speculated as to whether she was the kind of person who might have simply gone off with someone.⁴⁷
46. There is no doubt there was a delay in the police investigation commencing, due to the delay in reporting Glenyce missing and then the problems with accessing the area due to the rising floodwaters from Cyclone Joan.
47. On 22 December 1975, Detective Sergeant Cairnie from Karratha CIB interviewed Mr Coman, who had given Glenyce the lift as far as Nanutarra.
48. Glenyce's father and a family friend went to Carnarvon after Glenyce's disappearance, apparently around Christmas, to interview people and try to find out what happened to her. It does not seem they found anything further to assist the investigation.⁴⁸
49. On 30 December 1975, Senior Constable O'Sullivan from the Missing Persons Bureau forwarded a report to Superintendent Blackman suggesting there were unusual circumstances surrounding Glenyce's disappearance and he requested the file receive further attention from Karratha District Office.⁴⁹
50. Senior Constable O'Sullivan reported that all inquiries for Glenyce had proved negative at that time. Mr McGowan had reported that he and his wife had received no communication from Glenyce, including over Christmas. A newspaper article later suggested she had assured her parents she would be home for Christmas.⁵⁰ Mr McGowan told the police officer he had just returned from looking for Glenyce

⁴⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 4 and Tab 9 and Tab 20.

⁴⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [116] – [117].

⁴⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 19.

⁴⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 29.

in Carnarvon without success. A check with the Commonwealth Bank had confirmed she had not made any further withdrawals from her bank account since 9 December 1975. Based on his inquiries at that stage, Senior Constable O’Sullivan indicated that the evidence did “not give the impression of a person wandering off, of her own free will.”⁵¹ He suggested that because she was known as a friendly type of girl, “someone could have had evil intentions.”⁵²

51. Senior Constable O’Sullivan reported that there were a number of questions unanswered and he suggested that the file should be forwarded to CIB (Criminal Investigation Branch) for more extensive enquiries to be conducted on an urgent basis.⁵³ These investigations included interviewing Raymond Cunningham, speaking to the other families who were camping in the area that night, finding out more about Glenyce’s clothing and belongings at the time of her disappearance, and confirming the movements of Mr Coman matched his statement.⁵⁴
52. On 31 December 1975, the investigation file was received by Detective Cairnie, but it does not appear that significant action took place straight away. The next recorded activity in respect of the investigation involved Detective Sergeants Ghockson and Selwood of Karratha CIB attending Nanutarra with Police Aide Norman Charles. Limited photographs were taken of the area where Glenyce was last seen and a cursory search was done of the areas around the roadhouse, including a large rubbish pile near the roadhouse, but nothing of significance was found.⁵⁵
53. Raymond Cunningham was interviewed and a statement taken from him, although this statement can no longer be found. His room was also searched with his consent, but nothing of interest was located.⁵⁶
54. The Ashburton River, next to which Glenyce had camped that night, had risen almost 10 metres and flooded the area on 13 December 1975, well prior to the police attending. This had presumably washed away any potentially valuable trace of evidence. Detective Ghockson asked if Police Air Wing could conduct a flyover of the region to see if anything had been washed down river, but this request was denied.⁵⁷
55. On 7 January 1976 the Acting Chief of the CIB, Superintendent Roy Balcombe, was reported in a newspaper article expressing fears for the safety of Glenyce as she “was the type of girl who would maintain contact with her parents.”⁵⁸ The article also mentions “a fresh set of wheel tracks provided the only clue to her disappearance”⁵⁹ and it appears Superintendent Balcombe was the source of that information.

⁵¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 5 [9].

⁵² Exhibit 1, Tab 5 [13].

⁵³ Exhibit 1, Tab 5.

⁵⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 5.

⁵⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 5.

⁵⁶ T 14 – 15; Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 29.

⁵⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 29.

56. On 8 January 1976 a decision was made that Detective Sergeant Crowe from Perth Detectives would take over the police inquiry. From this point onwards several avenues of investigation were actioned, including following up several possible sightings of Glenyce, none of which were substantiated.⁶⁰
57. In January 1976 a sleeping bag was found on a road between Tom Price and Mount Nameless. It could not be identified or excluded as Glenyce's missing sleeping bag and was marked by the police as of no evidentiary value.⁶¹
58. The initial investigation was scaled back in April 1976, pending any further information. On three occasions remains were discovered in the area of the roadhouse, which led to consideration of whether they might belong to Glenyce, but Glenyce was excluded on each occasion via DNA samples from her relatives.⁶²
59. Patricia gave evidence that after she viewed the coronial file, she realised that there were many statements missing, including her own, and the photographs and telegram she gave to the police have not been located. It simply reinforced to her that the initial investigation was inadequate.⁶³

COLD CASE REVIEWS - 2003 & 2006

60. Patricia reported that towards the end of 2002 she contacted Major Crime because she wanted the telegram back that Glenyce had sent her. She also wanted to make contact with the police to express her anger at the poor standard of the initial police investigation into Glenyce's investigation. Patricia expressed the view that she felt that at the time of the initial investigation in 1975 the police were very focussed on Glenyce's drug taking and her lifestyle, and she was concerned their possible prejudice coloured the subsequent inquiry and led to a lack of diligence in the investigation.⁶⁴
61. Possibly prompted by Patricia's enquiry, in 2003 a cold case investigation began to reinvestigate Glenyce's disappearance. On 13 February 2006 the Special Crime Squad commenced another investigation into Glenyce's disappearance to further review the evidence and see if there were potential lines of inquiry that could be explored. After reviewing the materials it was suspected that Glenyce may have been the victim of homicide.⁶⁵
62. The primary person of interest from the earlier investigation was Raymond Cunningham, who was the last person to have been seen speaking to Glenyce. Further, Mr Cunningham owned a motorcycle, and a motorcycle was heard in the area that night.

⁶⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 6.

⁶¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 21.

⁶² T 10 - 11; Exhibit 2, p. 13.

⁶³ T 35.

⁶⁴ T 27.

⁶⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 30.

63. Mr Cunningham's uncle, Cameron Peters, was the lessee of the Nanutarra Roadhouse in 1975 and he employed Mr Cunningham to work in the roadhouse. There is an unsigned statement on the brief of evidence from Mr Peters, which appears to have been based on notes obtained during the 2006 reinvestigation. It is unclear why it was not signed although I note a statement from Mr Peters' wife, Norma Macey, was signed on 10 September 2007 and in her statement, Ms Macey indicates Mr Peters was deceased by that time.⁶⁶
64. There is evidence to suggest Mr Peters recalled that business was poor at the roadhouse on 9 and 10 December 1975 because little traffic was moving due to the flooded roads. Further, Mr Peters believed he was on duty the night of 10 December 1975. When working the night shift, he slept in a bed in the back room of the service station, near the night bell. Mr Peters apparently recalled seeing Mr Cunningham talking to Glenyce that day and he understood from a conversation with Mr Cunningham that Glenyce was camping down at the river and Mr Cunningham had arranged to see her later down near the river. He believed Mr Cunningham finished work at about 8.00 pm and he remembered Mr Cunningham going out on his motorbike and thought he was going to see Glenyce. He did not hear or see anything relevant after that.⁶⁷
65. Mr Peters' wife at the time, Norma Macey, provided a statement in September 2007. Understandably, she had a limited memory of events, but did recall her nephew Raymond Cunningham being employed at the roadhouse for a few months around the relevant time. She described Mr Cunningham as a "happy go lucky young person."⁶⁸ Ms Macey recalled Glenyce going missing in December 1975, although she only became aware she was missing a few weeks after her disappearance when police came to the roadhouse to investigate. Ms Macey had very little contact with Glenyce and didn't have any information that appeared to advance the investigation.⁶⁹
66. Kevin Plant, who lived with his family in a caravan near the roadhouse confirmed he had sold a motorcycle to Mr Cunningham prior to 10 December 1975.⁷⁰ Mr Cunningham later sold it to a young woman who was working at the roadhouse and taught her how to ride it.⁷¹
67. Other people who were employed at the roadhouse, or lived in the vicinity, at the time Glenyce went missing were spoken to by police. They provided police with information about the general layout of buildings in the area and where a body might be hidden.
68. Police also spoke to two women who had previously been in domestic relationships with Raymond Cunningham in the years after Glenyce's disappearance. Both women confirmed that Mr Cunningham had never made any admissions to being involved in

⁶⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 13 and Tab 14.

⁶⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 12.

⁶⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 13 [14].

⁶⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 13.

⁷⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 14.

⁷¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 15.

Glenyce's disappearance. He never spoke of her at all with one of the women. He did mention Glenyce in the course of a conversation with the other woman, during a television show that was about Glenyce's disappearance. He confirmed he had met her at the Nanutarra Roadhouse and that he may have been the last person to see her before she went missing. He did not say anything more and did not admit any involvement in her disappearance, despite the woman asking him on more than one occasion if he had killed Glenyce.⁷²

69. One of the women was given a bag by Mr Cunningham during the course of their relationship, which initially was thought by police to possibly match the description of one of the bags Glenyce was carrying at the time she disappeared. However, enquiries with the McGowan's were unable to confirm that the bag had belonged to Glenyce and Mr Cunningham's explanation that he bought it overseas matched his passport records.⁷³
70. The evidence given of Mr Cunningham's general character while in the relationships with the two women suggests that, at least by that time, he was capable of physical violence and sexual violence towards women. However, I note that the allegations of his conduct to these women was never put to Mr Cunningham and they are not proven, so the allegations must be treated with caution.⁷⁴
71. Mr Cunningham was spoken to by cold case investigators in relation to Glenyce's disappearance and he signed a statement on 27 December 2006. He confirmed that he was working at the roadhouse in December 1975 and met Glenyce while working there. He remembered talking to her in the middle of the day at the service station and then also driving down to the river on his motorbike and talking to her down by the river in the early evening, as the sun was going down. Mr Cunningham stated that he spoke to Glenyce about sleeping down by the river as she did not have a tent and "would get eaten alive by mozzies."⁷⁵ She said she liked being down by the river. She also told him she was going to get a lift to Tom Price.⁷⁶
72. Mr Cunningham told police that he and Glenyce "got on alright"⁷⁷ and he "maybe thought we could have had a bit of fun but nothing happened in particular."⁷⁸ Mr Cunningham stated that he remembered he was on night shift that night and slept in a back room at the roadhouse in case people came in late⁷⁹, although that does not match with his uncle's recollection. He recalled being relieved from duty at about 6.00 am and said he went straight down to the river on his motorbike to try to see Glenyce again, but she wasn't there, so he assumed she had been picked up.⁸⁰ He made no admissions in relation to Glenyce's disappearance.

⁷² Exhibit 1, Tab 23 and 24.

⁷³ Exhibit 1, Tab 23 and 24.

⁷⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 23 and 24.

⁷⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 28 [17].

⁷⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 28.

⁷⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 28 [25].

⁷⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 28 [25].

⁷⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 28.

⁸⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 28.

73. The police undertook covert actions regarding Mr Cunningham in an attempt to obtain any evidence he might have been involved in her disappearance, but nothing eventuated.⁸¹
74. Police and forensic officers also went to the Nanutarra roadhouse and conducted excavations in the tip area and took samples from the campgrounds and did a forensic examination of Mr Cunningham's former quarters, but nothing was found of significance.⁸² It was noted that Mr Cunningham had access to a motorbike at the relevant time, so if things had occurred between him and Glenyce and she came to some harm, it could have happened some distance away from the roadhouse.⁸³

FINAL COLD CASE REVIEW - 2016

75. Detective Sergeant Jarrad Doherty was attached to the Cold Case Homicide Squad in 2016 to 2017 and he prepared a report in relation to Glenyce's case, which was ultimately adopted and finalised by a colleague, Detective Senior Constable Holt, and provided to the Officer in Charge of the Cold Case Homicide Squad towards the end of 2016. The report, which drew upon the earlier police investigations in 1975, 2003 and 2006, concluded that, due to the passage of time, there were no further lines of inquiry that could be identified that might assist in determining the cause of, and any person responsible for, Glenyce's disappearance.⁸⁴
76. Detective Doherty gave evidence at the inquest to expand upon the work of the Cold Case Homicide Squad directed towards re-investigating Glenyce's disappearance.
77. Detective Doherty agreed that the original 1975 police investigation was missing some relevant information and the official record was not comprehensive, with some important information appearing to have been passed on by word of mouth, rather than being properly documented. The initial investigation was also hampered by the delay in reporting Glenyce's disappearance, as well as the environmental conditions at the time. The police did conduct a basic search of the roadhouse, and a local rubbish pile, as well as searching the riverbank where Glenyce was last seen camping, but there was no forensic examination conducted at that time and requests for some additional resources, such as air assets to widen the search, were denied for an unknown reason.⁸⁵
78. Despite these limitations, the investigating police at the time did identify a potential suspect in Glenyce's disappearance, Mr Raymond Cunningham, and he was interviewed, although the record of that interview is missing.
79. When the cold case review first commenced in 2003, there was very little material to go on, which Detective Doherty indicated was unfortunately not uncommon in such an old case. Detective Doherty noted that the police "have come a long way in

⁸¹ Exhibit 1, Tab 2, p. 7.

⁸² T 12 - 13.

⁸³ T 17.

⁸⁴ T 5; Exhibit 1, Tab 2.

⁸⁵ T 6 - 9.

relation to how we conduct investigations, the amount of forensic opportunities that are open to us, different investigative techniques”⁸⁶ and the way they record investigations has also changed markedly, so these new tools were utilised to try to improve upon the early investigation and consider any further lines of investigation that could still be explored.⁸⁷

80. In 2016, the police again considered what further lines of investigation might exist or opportunities to apply modern-day techniques, but none were identified.⁸⁸ Mr Cunningham died in 2008, so there was no opportunity to reinterview him again.⁸⁹
81. WA Police conducted ‘proof of life’ checks over the years, which are standard checks done by the Missing Persons Unit to check if a person has accessed or come into contact with any of the normal day-to-day services or businesses, such as banks, government agencies, police, etc. Checks are made whether the person has used accounts, had bills issued in their name, obtained a licence, used their passport, been charged with an offence or things of that nature. The checks ensure that the missing person hasn’t simply moved interstate or overseas or been imprisoned or even become homeless. There are also checks to make sure the person hasn’t formally changed their name.⁹⁰
82. All of the proof of life checks were run again this year, in 2021, with no trace of Glenyce being out and about in the community since her disappearance. Glenyce had never accessed her bank account again after her disappearance, even though she had, what would be considered, a reasonable amount of money in her account at that time.⁹¹
83. In conclusion, Detective Sergeant Doherty expressed the opinion that the evidence supports the conclusion that Glenyce died on or about the time she disappeared on 10 December 1975.⁹²

VIEWS OF GLENYCE’S FAMILY AND FRIENDS

84. Glenyce’s mother described Glenyce in a quote, not long after her disappearance, as “extremely devoted to the family”⁹³ and it is clear her parents did not believe she had not ceased contact with them by choice. Her father was quoted in another newspaper article, on 11 January 1976, as stating that “if she was alive and capable of doing so, I have no doubt she would have contacted us.”⁹⁴ He told journalists he feared Glenyce had been kidnapped or even murdered.⁹⁵

⁸⁶ T 7.

⁸⁷ T 7 – 8.

⁸⁸ T 8, 12.

⁸⁹ T 18.

⁹⁰ T 19.

⁹¹ T 19 - 20.

⁹² T 20.

⁹³ Exhibit 1, Tab 29.

⁹⁴ Exhibit 1, Tab 29.

⁹⁵ Exhibit 1, Tab 29.

85. On 28 June 1980, several years after her disappearance, Glenyce's mother was quoted in another newspaper article as indicating that there had not been any family quarrels before she left and Glenyce was close to her family and had no reason to disappear or not to contact them. Her father was reported as continuing to believe she had been kidnapped or murdered.⁹⁶
86. As late as 1997, another newspaper article referring to Glenyce's baffling disappearance so many years before, noted that Glenyce's elderly parents had kept the same number and lived in the same house, hoping she might one day return.⁹⁷ Sadly, both Mr and Mrs McGowan have since passed away, without ever knowing what happened to their beloved daughter.
87. Interestingly, in that article in 1997, First Class Constable Rob Stuart was quoted as saying that even though 21 years had passed, police still believed it was possible she was still alive but perhaps had been hiding a secret that she didn't want her parents to know. Therefore, she chose to disappear and perhaps found it impossible to come back.⁹⁸ This appears to be the line of thinking that her brother, Trevor, has adopted, rather than believe that his sister met a terrible fate in or around Nanutarra at such a young age. However, I do note in an article in *The West Australian* dated 16 December 2006, Trevor was quoted as appearing to accept that this hope that he had held out for so long was less likely and it was more likely she had been killed or been in an accident that was covered up and he was hopeful that his sister's killer might one day be brought to justice.⁹⁹
88. In a recent article related to the listing of this inquest, Trevor McGowan was reported as still believing his sister could still be alive and living in the community, because she told him before she went away that she "would like to become anonymous and disappear and change her name."¹⁰⁰
89. In order to elaborate upon his theory, and noting Trevor had not previously been asked to provide a statement in this investigation, Trevor McGowan was asked to give evidence at the inquest. Trevor heard the evidence of Detective Sergeant Doherty and Patricia Thomson before he gave his evidence.
90. It was apparent that Trevor and Glenyce had a close sibling relationship and, to this day, he remains deeply affected by her disappearance and the terrible affect it had on his parents. Trevor acknowledged that he didn't see Glenyce that often before she disappeared, because they were often not living near each other, but he did remember one day when they had a discussion about a debt Trevor owed to their father. Glenyce told Trevor she believed he should repay their father the money, but also

⁹⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 29.

⁹⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 29

⁹⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 29.

⁹⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 29.

¹⁰⁰ *The West Australian*, Saturday, February 13, 2021, pages from 22 to 23, "My sister who's been missing for 40 years is alive."

spoke about a debt she owed to a dentist. In the context of that conversation, Glenyce mentioned to Trevor that she would like to “disappear and become anonymous.”¹⁰¹

91. Trevor recalled the above conversation when Glenyce went missing, and he also recalled that Glenyce had lent him her car to look after while she was away (as he had sold his before going on a trip), which in hindsight he believed could have had some significance.¹⁰²
92. Trevor acknowledged in his evidence that he is an optimist by nature and doesn't tend to look for the negative things in life, so when his parents were fretting about Glenyce's disappearance, he told them they didn't need to, as it was possible that Glenyce had simply chosen to disappear. His parents didn't necessarily accept this was a possibility, but Trevor still maintains this is a possibility. Trevor accepts that there is also a strong possibility that Glenyce has died, but he agreed during questioning that he still wishes to keep hope alive.¹⁰³
93. Trevor also indicated that he was told by police during the earlier cold case investigations that a lot of work had been done by police to try to obtain any evidence or admission from Mr Cunningham but none had been obtained, and they had become convinced that he had nothing to do with it.¹⁰⁴ This is not indicated in the final police investigation, but it is certainly clear no evidence has ever been obtained to place Mr Cunningham any higher than a person of interest in the investigation.
94. As noted above, Patricia Thomson was one of Glenyce's closest friends, and was the person that Glenyce was intending to visit in Tom Price. Patricia gave a statement to police in 1975, which unfortunately has been lost,¹⁰⁵ and she also provided a detailed statement to police in 2003. At that time, many years had passed since these events, but Patricia still had a good recollection of what occurred.¹⁰⁶ Patricia also gave evidence at the inquest, and it was apparent she has given a great deal of thought over the years as to what happened to her friend to prevent her arrival in Tom Price.
95. In her statement, Patricia indicated that from her own personal knowledge of Glenyce, she knew that if Glenyce had made plans to travel with the Munroes to Nanutarra she would have done so. If for some reason Glenyce had needed to change her plans, she believes Glenyce would have told the Munroes, so as not to worry them, even if it meant leaving a note. She states she knows this because Glenyce “was always very respectful of older people and would keep them informed.”¹⁰⁷
96. Patricia did indicate that Glenyce might hitchhike and accept a lift from a passing truck, as she had been known to do so in the past. However, she believes it is unlikely Glenyce would have done so if she had already arranged a lift from the

¹⁰¹ T 36.

¹⁰² T 37.

¹⁰³ T 36 – 39.

¹⁰⁴ T 40.

¹⁰⁵ T 31 - 32.

¹⁰⁶ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

¹⁰⁷ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [121].

Munroes. This is particularly so, given Glenyce was aware the Munroes were travelling as a family and knew Patricia's family. In any event, she still believes Glenyce would have informed the Munroes before doing so.¹⁰⁸

97. Patricia firmly believes that something happened to Glenyce against her will at the Nanutarra Roadhouse that prevented her from travelling with the Munroes.¹⁰⁹ Patricia has never heard from Glenyce again after receiving the telegram, despite them being very close friends for many years and Glenyce knowing that Patricia would be worried about her and was soon to give birth to her first child.¹¹⁰ Patricia is sure Glenyce would at least have sent her a telegram if she had changed her plans.¹¹¹
98. Patricia gave evidence that she could think of no reason why Glenyce would choose to disappear and she firmly believes Glenyce would never have deliberately done such a thing to her parents. Patricia explained that Glenyce was acutely aware of her mother's frailty, as her mother had had a stroke a number of years earlier, and Glenyce was very protective of her. Glenyce loved her parents immensely and she "would never have put them through anything like what they went through,"¹¹² noting they were devastated by her disappearance. Patricia also believes that Glenyce's relationship with her parents was such that, if she had been pregnant or had any other worries, the first people she would have gone to would have been her parents "in a heartbeat."¹¹³
99. Patricia was clear at the end of her evidence that she believes Glenyce is dead and she believes Glenyce was murdered around the time she disappeared from the roadhouse in late 1975.¹¹⁴

CONCLUSION

100. I indicated at the conclusion of the inquest that I am satisfied that Glenyce was not the kind of person who would voluntarily disappear and leave her parents, extended family and friends to worry about her, never knowing where she had gone. I believe that something happened to Glenyce that prevented her from contacting her parents after that date.
101. Based upon all the evidence before me, I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Glenyce McGowan is deceased and that she died on or about 10 December 1975 in the area of the Nanutarra Roadhouse. It appears very likely that she was the victim of foul play, but there is insufficient evidence before me to make any findings in that regard and the cause and manner of her death must remain open.
102. It is important at this stage to note that while there was evidence obtained by the police that pointed them in the direction of the last person who was known to have

¹⁰⁸ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

¹⁰⁹ Exhibit 1, Tab 20 [129].

¹¹⁰ Exhibit 1, Tab 20.

¹¹¹ T 33.

¹¹² T 30.

¹¹³ T 33.

¹¹⁴ T 34.

had contact with Glenyce, there is no evidence to directly link him to her disappearance. Further, he is now deceased, so he cannot be afforded an opportunity to give evidence, or make submissions, on his own behalf. Accordingly, I make it explicit that I do not make any finding that any particular person was involved in Glenyce's disappearance and death.

103. It is very sad that a vibrant, joyful young woman such as Glenyce was taken away in such mysterious circumstances and her family and friends have been left with few answers for so many years. I regret that I have not been able to provide much more in the way of answers due to the lapse of time and the paucity of information available from the initial investigation. However, I hope that these findings at least provide some small measure of closure. For Trevor McGowan, in particular, I extend my deepest sympathies and I respect and understand his desire to still keep burning a small flame of hope for his sister.

S H Linton
Deputy State Coroner
28 May 2021