QUEENSLAND COURTS

OFFICE OF THE STATE CORONER

NON-INQUEST FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF RICHARD JAMES KING

CITATION:	**Investigation into the death of Richard James King**
TITLE OF COURT:	Coroner's Court
JURISDICTION:	Southport
FINDINGS OF:	Mr James McDougall, Coroner
CATCHWORDS:	**CORONERS:** Maritime collision, boat and surfer, Currumbin Bar.

Counsel Assisting: Ms Rhiannon Helsen, Office of the State Coroner

Introduction

Mr Richard James King was 42 years of age at the time of his death.

On 8 May 2011, at around 8:45am, a collision occurred between a boat driven by Mr Geoffrey Burgess and Mr King, who was paddling on a surfboard at the Currumbin Bar entrance to Currumbin Creek. Mr King sustained severe head trauma as a result of coming into contact with the boat's propeller. Despite assistance being rendered by Mr Burgess and other surfers in the area at the time, as well as officers from the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), Mr King was pronounced deceased after having been transported to the Gold Coast Hospital.

Sequence of events

On 8 May 2011, at around 5:30am, Mr Burgess left his residence with the intention of travelling out to Burleigh Heads to fish. At approximately 5:45am he crossed the Currumbin Bar in his 5 metre fibreglass Cruise Craft Reef Raider boat.

At the time of the incident, Mr Burgess had owned the vessel for around seven years and was an experienced skipper, having held a recreational marine drivers license since 1986. He has over 25 years experience in boating and crossing coastal bars in South East Queensland.

Conditions at the Currumbin Bar that morning were very good with clear fine weather, light winds and a fairly small inconsistent swell. There were a large number of surfers in the general area.

On Mr Burgess' return at around 8:30am, he approached the Currumbin Bar and adjusted his speed to the same speed as the incoming waves whilst travelling towards Currumbin Creek (approximately 15 knots). Mr Burgess noticed a number of surfers (approximately 20 to 30) in the area and made eye contact with them so that they would know that he had seen them and would steer around them.

Whilst travelling between the waves after passing the surfers, Mr Burgess suddenly saw another surfer (Mr King) appear as he pulled out of the wave directly in front of him. He reduced his speed and swung the vessel starboard, before hearing a thud as the vessel passed over Mr King.

According to Ms Robyn Muhl, who is a member of the Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) and was stationed in the radio room located on the eastern side of the Currumbin Headland, she saw Mr Burgess' boat approaching the Currumbin bar in a direct line, approximately 50 metres from Lacey's rock wall. The location of the VMR radio room ensures that operators have unobstructed views of the entrance and vessels operating across the bar. Radio operators record each vessel that transits the bar.

Ms Muhl saw a lone surfer (Mr King) in the deeper water between sandbanks in line with the creek mouth, about 30 metres to sea from the Lacey's rock

wall. He appeared to be resting, facing towards the rock wall and was in the trough between two waves. The waves were about 0.5 metres in height. She observed the boat to be using the crest of the wave to the sea side of the surfer. The boat was in a slightly nose up position and maintaining the speed of the wave. In Ms Muhl's opinion, the speed of the boat was not excessive, considering it appeared to be maintaining the speed of the wave. Furthermore, the boat was not being operated in an unusual manner and was crossing the bar in a normal fashion. There was only one surfer (Mr King) adjacent to the path of the oncoming boat. He was lying prone on his board at the time and was stationary. He was positioned ahead and on the port side of the vessel. Ms Muhl did not expect that there would be a collision. She then saw the surfer look over his right shoulder before disappearing into the white-water. She saw the boat pass the surfer and then perform an immediate u-turn. Ms Muhl realised something was wrong and telephoned the Gold Coast Water Police before calling an ambulance.

Other surfers in the water at the time corroborate Mr Burgess' contention that he was travelling at around 15 knots as he passed through the bar and was operating the vessel in a safe and controlled manner. A number of the surfers in the area at the time stated that they had not seen Mr King prior to the collision.

Mr Burgess immediately turned his vessel around and went to the assistance of Mr King, who was then floating face down in the water with massive trauma to his head. Other surfers in the area also came to Mr King's assistance, ensuring his head was kept out of the water and helping to lift him into Mr Burgess' boat. Mr Burgess immediately got onto the marine radio and requested assistance. He then conveyed Mr King to the boat ramp where lifeguards were in attendance.

A short time later, QAS officers arrived. Mr King was stabilised before being transported to the Gold Coast Hospital. He was pronounced deceased at 10:51am.

Autopsy

On 10 May 2011, Dr Dianne Little performed an external and full internal post-mortem examination. A number of histological and toxicological tests were also conducted.

The post-mortem examination revealed a severe head injury consisting of a large laceration on the scalp with underlying comminuted, compound fracture of the skull with extrusion of the brain from the wound (injury 2). There were also diffuse haemorrhages throughout the underlying brain as well as lacerations on the upper surface of the brain on the right side. Another laceration was also noted on the left temple (injury 1) with underlying injury to the muscle and a small depressed fracture in its base.

At the request of Dr Little, police brought Mr Burgess' propeller to the autopsy. The propeller was compared to the sites of the head injuries, which were found to be consistent with having been caused by the propeller. From the

shape and orientation of the blades, it would appear that injury 1 was the first injury occasioned on the head. Injury 2 appeared to have occurred subsequently and was found to be the direct cause of Mr King's death.

Investigation by police and Maritime Safety Queensland

Shortly after the incident, Gold Coast Water Police were notified and attended the scene. Photographs of Mr Burgess' vessel and the sea conditions at Currumbin were subsequently taken by scenes of crime officers.

A mechanical inspection of Mr Burgess' vessel was conducted by Marine Technician, Mr Anthony Aitkin. Overall, the vessel was found to be in good operating condition with no mechanical issues or faults. The vessel also had all of the required safety equipment aboard.

During the course of the investigation, statements were obtained from all relevant witnesses to the incident. Footage from the Coastalwatch Cameras, which overlook Currumbin Alley were sourced, as was other footage of the conditions on the day. The incident itself was not captured on video.

Electronic interview with Mr Burgess

Mr Burgess was spoken to by police at the scene and provided a signed notebook statement. A breath test was also administered and found to be negative. He then voluntarily accompanied police to the Burleigh Heads Police Station and participated in an electronic record of interview.

During his interview with police, Mr Burgess stated that there was only about one and half seconds between when Mr King first appeared to when he was hit. He recalled turning the wheel of his vessel starboard immediately when he saw Mr King; however he did not think the vessel had responded by the time they collided.

Mr Burgess recalls that he was travelling at approximately 15 knots at the time to keep up with the wave he was following in. He stated that he was keeping a diligent lookout for surfers and other persons, as he always did, coming back through the Bar. He navigated a path through surfers and paddle boarders in the area at the time. He acknowledged that he came within 10 metres of the surfers either side of the vessel. Whilst Mr Burgess was aware that in enclosed waters vessels are required to do 6 knots, he contended that this could not be done when in the waves, as vessels must maintain the speed of the wave in order to avoid getting swamped.

Mr Burgess believes that Mr King must have been lying down on his board in front of the wave as he did not see him. Mr King simply popped up in front of him. He estimated that the point of impact was 60 to 70 metres due north of Lacey's rock.

Mr Burgess regularly navigated through the Currumbin Bar and estimated that he undertook around 40 trips a year in this area. He had been navigating the Currumbin Bar for some 20 years.

Interim investigation reports

During the investigation, Marine Officer, Mr Anthony Allback, completed two interim reports regarding the incident, dated the 11 May 2011 and 14 July 2011.

According to Mr Allback, the area where the collision occurred, the Currumbin Bar leading into Currumbin Creek, is a known high risk area where shifting sandbars, large numbers of surfers, and many types of vessels and watercraft come into close proximity in various conditions. Dredging of the lower reaches of the creek have proved effective as a temporary measure only, as any large swell events fill the deeper areas with sand quickly. In times of heavy rainfall in the Currumbin Valley and flood of the Currumbin Creek, a temporary channel develops along the northern groyne and in a northern direction out from the groyne and into the surf zone. The area from Currumbin Point, north along 'the Alley' to the south end of Palm Beach, locally known as 'Lacey's' is a very popular surfing area, as waves suitable for all types of water craft and experience levels can be found in the one area.

Preliminary investigations suggested that it was an appropriate time for Mr Burgess to cross the Bar considering the ambient weather conditions and making tide. However, there would have been quite a number of persons in the water at the time. Mr Allback notes that interaction between board riders and motorised craft in the Currumbin Bar is not new. In his view, further regulation of the area to manage interaction between the two groups would be difficult to apply and enforce. The area is a coastal bar which is an area of danger that persons enter at their own risk.

Ultimately, it was Mr Allback's finding that this incident was an accident in a known high risk area. He suggested that a Marine Bulletin be produced to remind the public of the known dangers as a result of interaction between vessels in coastal bars.

Final conclusions following the investigation

Having considered all of the evidence obtained during the course of the extensive investigation, Police and Maritime Safety Queensland share the view that there is no evidence to suggest that Mr Burgess was not keeping a proper lookout at the time of the collision or driving his vehicle in an unsafe manner. Rather, his vessel's passage through the area was summarised by witnesses as about the same speed as the waves (15 knots) while showing consideration for surfers in the proximity. Four witnesses stated that they did not see Mr King just prior to the collision. According to VMR operator, Ms Muhl, Mr King was seen to be lying prone just prior to the collision. She did not expect that Mr Burgess' vessel and Mr King would collide. It appears from the independent witness accounts and Mr Burgess' record of interview that Mr King had not been able to be seen as he was prone on the surfboard immediately prior to the collision and was thus hidden from Mr Burgess' view by the wave between them.

This incident was categorised as a tragic accident due to the high risk and constantly changing conditions of the Currumbin Bar and the close proximity of surfers and motor vessels.

Maritime Safety Queensland report, 'Currumbin Creek Bar Navigational Safety Management', dated June 2011

Since the accident involving Mr King, Maritime Safety Queensland have produced a report entitled, *'Currumbin Creek Bar Navigational Safety Management'* (the Report) which examines the options to manage the risks associated with the interaction between vessels and surfers at this location. A copy of the report was submitted as part of the coronial investigation.

The purpose of the Report was to review options to mitigate risks associated with the interaction between vessels and surfers at Currumbin Creek on the southern Gold Coast.

The Report notes that Currumbin Creek and its surrounding waters have been popular with recreational boating enthusiasts for many years. Boats frequently transit the creek from the public boat ramps to the creek mouth to gain access to the ocean, particularly Palm Beach Reef. The creek is also very popular for passive water activities such as kayaking, stand up paddle boards and swimming. Currumbin 'Alley' is extremely popular with surfboard riders and learner surfers.

While conditions at the entrance bar vary, the most navigable track for small vessels is often through the surf break used by board riders. This creates interaction between vessels and surfboard riders who compete for the same areas to carry out their activities.

The most suitable track for vessels wishing to cross the bar changes regularly based on a number of factors. At times, the best approach is along the northern training wall, followed by a north westerly heading out through the breaking surf. This track allows for interaction with board riders surfing North West of the training wall. As most surfers begin their ride off the Currumbin Rock, potential vessel/surfer interaction is highest when the most navigable track leads towards Currumbin Rock.

The Report notes that the incident causing Mr King's death occurred as a boat was crossing the bar at the entrance of the Currumbin Creek.

Current dredging program

The Report recognises that there is an extended history of calls to dredge Currumbin Creek, as well as other coastal bars. Coastal bar crossings are a recognised navigational hazard and Marine Safety Queensland has a number of initiatives to ensure that mariners are aware of the dangers and take appropriate safety precautions.

Transport and Main Roads (TMR) promote the recognition and management of risks from coastal bar crossings, however do not dredge coastal bars, except as part of an adopted management scheme. While dredging will

alleviate the hazard, the highly dynamic environment can quickly re-establish the bar, and dredge operations are restricted by the frequent and hazardous surf at these locations. As such, dredging is generally an expensive and unreliable solution to coastal bar hazards.

The Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) dredges the Currumbin and Tallebudgera creeks annually, primarily to mitigate flooding and coastal erosion. Water quality and navigational benefits are also realised, but coastal access is not a designed objective.

Physical processes and engineering options

A number of coastal process studies have been undertaken of the Currumbin entrance and the wider Gold Coast area. These studies have identified a net northerly movement of approximately 0.5 million m^3 of sand along the Gold Coast beaches per annum. The high transport rate sustains the complex bar system at the Currumbin Creek that provides the famous surfing break. It also makes it both costly and difficult to maintain a fixed navigational channel through the entrance.

Previous studies of the Currumbin Creek area have focused on four main issues:

- Keeping the entrance open to maintain recreational and environmental water quality.
- Keeping the entrance open to provide flood mitigation for properties in the creek catchment.
- Sourcing sand for erosion mitigation at Palm Beach.
- Investigating the feasibility of improving navigational access to the ocean.

Several coastal process studies have been undertaken in the area and the physical processes are well documented. The first three issues above are managed by the GCCC via an annual dredging campaign clearing the inner Currumbin Creek entrance throat and placing the material on Palm Beach as nourishment.

TMR will generally not fund dredging at coastal bars like the Currumbin Creek entrance, where high transport rates mean high recurrent dredging costs and high uncertainty regarding the ability to maintain standards. Dredging is only considered in cases where detailed engineering and economic analyses demonstrate it is part of a viable solution to improved navigational outcomes.

Engineering options investigated for Currumbin Creek have been focused on the four issues as outlined previously, primarily to keep the throat clear and the beach nourished. Navigational benefits have also been realised, but have not been the primary focus and have been limited due to the difficultly in maintaining a channel at and beyond the entrance.

Sand Bypass System

Whilst fixed sand bypass systems are relatively uncommon, there are plants just north and south of Currumbin. This option would involve installation of a jet pump system, notionally on a fixed jetty to the south of Currumbin rock, to pick up the sand moving north before it gets to the entrance channel. One or more discharge outlets would need to be established on Palm Beach. In addition to a number of other requirements (including additional land for a pumping plant and pipes), the removal of the entrance bar by dredging would be fundamental to the establishment of a fixed sand bypass system. This would remove or greatly alter 'the Alley' surf break. Whilst this would potentially reduce the risk of vessel/surf craft interaction, the same outcome could be achieved by banning surfing there.

There are however additional challenges at this location related to research into an optimal training wall configuration. The relatively small tidal prism of Currumbin Creek means that any sand leaking past the sand bypass system during storm events would rapidly fill in the entrance and therefore frequent dredging would be required to maintain navigability.

The Report acknowledges that whilst it may be possible to design a system that is sensitive to local conditions, the challenges are considerable.

Dredging

Improved navigational access could be provided through dredging; however the dredge would have to be available on a permanent basis to ensure a clear channel because of the highly dynamic nature of the location. Furthermore, operation of the dredge would be restricted by wave climate, so a permanent channel cannot be assured. The frequent presence of an operating dredge would also create a potential hazard for both vessels and surf-craft.

Sand bed fluidisation

This concept relies on a grid of pipes anchored to the sea floor at the entrance and/or along the channel. Water or air is then pumped through the pipes, which are perforated or have nozzles, during an ebb tide. This mobilises any sand in the channel, allowing the tidal flows to carry the sand away from the entrance.

This option relies heavily on the tidal flows being high enough to carry the sand away. Currumbin Creek has a very small tidal prism, which is why the entrance requires annual dredging. Such a system would only work in the throat of the channel, so it would not serve to improve navigation across the bar unless it was installed in conjunction with modified training walls to provide an extended narrow channel out to sea.

The pipes themselves, however, could prove to be a navigational hazard within the channel and the training walls could alter the surf break and/or provide a hazard for surfers. Implementation of a pipe grid without large training works would potentially enhance GCCC's current dredging objectives, but it is unlikely to maintain a navigable entrance. While this option may

provide some benefits to the management of Currumbin Creek, the technology is largely unproven, and would probably require substantial training wall works for there to be any hope of acceptable navigational outcomes. The Report notes that it is hard to imagine a configuration for works at this location that would address navigational requirements without compromising other amenity values, including surfing.

Modified council dredging program

Whilst GCCC's current dredging program is not focused on navigational outcomes, it does provide a better defined channel through the throat of the estuary, thereby concentrating tidal and flood flows. GCCC typically dredge once a year, however, there have been suggestions to increase this to twice per year.

Whilst this would probably provide increased navigational benefits, the magnitude and duration would be dependent on weather conditions. It is also uncertain how this modification would affect the other outcomes GCCC seeks to provide through dredging. While improvements could be realised, unintended consequences are also possible. Current practices have provided relatively stable and satisfactory outcomes.

Usage, operational arrangements and options

The number of vessels crossing at the Currumbin Bar varies with the available depth of water and the size of ocean swells. Vessels using Currumbin Bar are generally less than 7 metres long, with the majority less than 5 metres in length.

In 2010, VMR recorded 6556 bar crossing by 3228 vessels, an average of 62 vessels per week or eight per day.

Statistics provided by the GCCC Life Guard Service indicate a large number of passive users, including paddle craft and swimmers, at Currumbin Alley.

Traffic lanes/marine zones

In November 2010, Marine Safety Queensland gazetted a Notification of Danger to Marine Safety that prohibited free-styling, wave jumping or tow-in surfing when non-powered watercraft are present at the mouth of Currumbin and Tallebudgera Creek. The establishment of these restricted areas has seen a decline in the number of persons operating personal watercraft ('PWC') or jet skis at Currumbin and thus a decline in the interaction of passive craft and PWC.

The introduction of any specific boating traffic lanes at Currumbin bar would be difficult to maintain, given the dynamic nature of the waterway. Rapidly changing conditions at the bar would necessitate the relocation of any traffic lanes that may be established. Crews would find themselves at Currumbin every week to reposition markers that would identify any traffic lanes. Alternatively, vessels would be directed to navigate in a way that may not be the safest of navigational courses.

The Report notes that the only way to eliminate the interaction of motorised craft and passive non-motorised craft would be to establish a marine zone prohibiting the use of motorised vessels at Currumbin bar. This would not be popular with the boaters that use the Currumbin bar and to some extent the residences of the upstream canal systems who like the status of ocean access.

Warning horns/flags

A warning system using horns is in use for boats operating off the beach at the Pass at Byron Bay. Commercial dive boats negotiate the surf break to access offshore dive grounds and in doing so use the horn warning system per the code of conduct. One long blast of the vessel's horn is sounded before moving through the surf zone. The code of conduct prescribes conditions for operators navigating in the area, like minimum speeds to be observed while crossing the break and use of the far end of the beach to gain access to the ocean.

Whilst a similar warning system could be used by vessels operating Currumbin Bar, unrestricted access at Currumbin could compromise adoption due to the greater number and diversity of operators.

Vessels at Currumbin could also be required, or encouraged, to use a flag, similar to those sometimes seen on bicycles. The intent would be similar to the use of the horn, however, the warning would be visual rather than audible.

The Report notes that whilst these options both have advantages of being relatively low cost, the extent to which they would be effective is uncertain and it may be difficult to get 100% compliance if this is the only location in the State where they are implemented, as vessels may arrive without the required equipment. It might be possible to install some sort of centralised warning system, but it is not obvious how this could be designed to operate automatically or remotely.

Education

The waters around the Currumbin estuary are serviced by two public boat ramps where the majority of vessels using the bar launch and retrieve. Signage is already in place at both ramps warning vessel operators about the Notification of Danger to Marine Safety and a general warning about the dangerous bar conditions. The Report suggests that these signs could be updated to incorporate all messages on the one sign and an additional warning about the interaction between surfers and boats.

VMR could also be utilised to warn vessel operators by marine radio whether surfers are present in the navigational area and to provide general cautionary advice regarding crossing the bar. However, the Report notes that there would be concerns for the State and/or VMR about possibile liability should this be implemented.

Consultation in preparation of the Report

As part of the preparation of the Report, Marine Safety Queensland undertook widespread, informal consultations with a number of stakeholders, including a number of interest groups, such as the Alley board riders, VMR, Byron Bay Dive Centre, local businesses, Queensland Recreational Boating Council and the Currumbin Surf Riders. An online discussion forum was also established to allow members of the public to provide comments and suggestions.

The Report states that the most noteworthy sentiment in relation to the management of the risk at Currumbin is the relatively universal lack of support for any sort of bans or restrictions that would effectively support the rights of one set of stakeholders by denying use to another group. There is recognition that this approach would mitigate the risk, however, neither surfers nor boat operators want to be banned and neither group is inclined to impose that outcome on the other.

This sentiment was accompanied by a general acknowledgement that the presence of vessels and surf craft in the area is simply a risk that users accept in deciding to recreate at that location.

It was also evident through the consultation process that stakeholders saw the recent changes in relation to the operation of PWC's in the area as positive.

Whilst there was some support for dredging, it is notable that a number of stakeholders appreciate the complex dynamics of the problem and the limitations of alternative physical interactions.

Recommendations

The Report ultimately made the following recommendations:

(a) Dredging is not a solution
The concept of using dredging to provide a predictable navigational outcome at Currumbin is impractical due to the naturally high sand transport rates at this and other coastal bars.

(b) A designated channel is not a solution
A marked, but un-dredged, channel could direct vessels to navigate through an area that is not the safest option. Even if a dredged channel could be maintained, there would still be a risk of surfer/vessel interaction within the channel.

(c) A ban, whilst effective, is unsupported
Banning either vessels or surfers would effectively eliminate the risk of unsafe interaction, however both groups consider the existing risk to be preferable to a ban.

(d) Ongoing and increased education is supported
Safe behaviour is universally supported as a way to manage risk. Opportunities to enhance existing signage,

promote the role of the VMR as a communications base, and adopt systems such as horns and/or flags should be explored further and pursued where feasible.

(e) Legislation should be clarified

The current lack of uncertainty regarding whether a surfer is a vessel is problematic. Legislation should be amended, as necessary, to clearly define surf craft as either vessels or swimmers.

(f) Further investigations are not warranted

TMR has invested in physical interventions, through sand bypassing, training walls, and/or dredging at certain locations where technical investigation and economic studies support action. The challenges at Currumbin are such that further investigations of these options are not considered warranted. The inability to manage sand for navigation without adversely affecting surfing is probably the most significant factor; any solution would have to favour one over the other and would probably struggle operationally and attract constant criticism. In addition, the value of boating activity is relatively small and unlikely to warrant the substantial level of investment that would probably be required.

Conclusions

Mr King was 42 years of age when he died as a result of head trauma sustained during a collision with a boat at the Currumbin Bar on 8 May 2011.

I am satisfied that the circumstances surrounding Mr King's death have been thoroughly and professionally investigated by the police and Maritime Safety Queensland. The findings subsequently made by both parties are appropriate and supported by the evidence obtained. This incident was clearly an unfortunate accident due to the high risk and constantly changing conditions of the Currumbin Bar. Independent witness accounts confirm that Mr Burgess was not driving in an unsafe or unruly manner at the time of the collision. He was crossing the bar at a suitable time, considering the tide and weather conditions. Mr Burgess is clearly an experienced boat operator and had navigated the Bar many times previously. It seems likely that Mr King was not visible to Mr Burgess shortly prior to the accident as he was lying prone on his surf board. In fact, a number of the surfers in the area at the time had not seen Mr King prior to the collision.

It is clear from the material obtained during the course of the coronial investigation that the Currumbin Bar is a well known high risk area which is shared by many vessels and surfers. As such, it is common for them to come into close proximity with one another. As Mr Allback noted in his interim investigation report, this particular coastal bar is an area of danger, which persons enter at their own risk. Despite these high risk conditions and the popularity of the coastal bar, fatal collisions are not a regular occurrence.

The extensive investigation subsequently conducted by Maritime Safety Queensland into navigational safety management of the Currumbin Creek Bar following Mr King's death demonstrates the difficulties associated with further regulation and actions in the area in order to mitigate the obvious risk. It is clear that all options have been carefully considered by Maritime Safety Queensland and there is difficulty with the implementation and success of each of these as a result of the specific nature of the bar. Whilst the only effective way to completely mitigate the risk of interaction between boat operators and surfers is to ban one party, this is clearly not widely supported by the community. It is evident from the Report that Marine Safety Queensland is committed to ongoing education in relation to the dangers associated with the coastal bar, including increased signage and is exploring further options, such as the use of horns and flags.

After considering the evidence gathered during the course of the coronial investigation and the subsequent Report prepared by Maritime Safety Queensland regarding the management of navigational safety at the Currumbin Bar, I have formed the view that an inquest into this matter is not necessary. There is an inherent risk, which is well known to all surfers and boat operators when they choose to enter the ocean, particularly in a coastal bar with ever changing conditions, as is the case at Currumbin. It is clear from the Report that such risks can never truly be completely mitigated without imposing a ban on one party. I am satisfied that Maritime Safety Queensland is aware of the risks and has taken steps to attempt to mitigate those as much as is possible considering the well known high risk conditions of the coastal bar. As such, I propose to close the coronial investigation without proceeding to inquest.

Mr James McDougall
Coroner
Southport
5 February 2014