

Inquest into the death of Thomas Hunt and Youngeun Kim

Coroner Nerida Wilson conducted a joint inquest into the deaths of Thomas Hunt and Youngeun Kim who died in separate events two years apart at Josephine Falls, located in the Wooroonooran National Park. The coroner investigated measures that could be implemented to minimise the risk of water related fatalities at Josephine Falls.

Coroner Nerida Wilson delivered her findings of inquest on 18 October 2019.

The Queensland Government responds to recommendations directed to government agencies at inquests by informing the community if a recommendation will be implemented or the reason why a recommendation is not supported.

Further information relating the implementation of recommendations can be obtained from the responsible agency named in the response.

Recommendation 2

The Department of Environment and Science continue to fund the development and maintenance of a water monitoring and alarm system at Mount Bartle Frere and Josephine Falls.

Response and action: the recommendation is implemented.

Responsible agency: Department of Environment and Science.

On 3 February 2020 the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and the Minister for Arts responded:

A water monitoring and alarm system, depicted in the images on the following page, was installed at Josephine Falls in June 2019.

This system includes a combination of water gauge markers and a flashing light alarm and was developed by experts in hydrology and electrical engineering.

The water gauge markers visually represent the risk levels at different swift water heights so that people can see when the risks are too high to enter the water. The water gauge markers are colour coded and use standard warning symbols for those with non-English speaking backgrounds. The flashing alarm system connects to water level monitors and activates when water conditions reach a pre-defined level which is considered to be unsafe, or when levels are likely to reach the unsafe level within the next 10 minutes.

The alarm system provides an additional measure to the water gauge markers to alert people on the creek bank of the risk of entering the water, and for people already in the water who may be unaware of the changing conditions.

The department is funded in its ongoing maintenance budget to undertake regular testing of the equipment and to maintain the infrastructure.



Sign and gauge post installed at the bottom pool.



The platform at the lower pool, showing three of the four beacons installed at that location



The cabinet at the lower pool, containing the main controller for the warning system.



The cabinet at the middle pool, containing the second controller for the warning system.

Recommendation 3

The working group comprising the following key stakeholders: Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service continue to be supported financially and administratively by their respective agencies, and that the group be enlarged to include local Ngadjon-ji Elders, so as to enable continuation of education programs, training exercises and recommendations for the enhancement of visitor safety at Josephine Falls.

The coroner also commented that: Uncle Ernie Raymont on behalf of the Ngadjon-ji people suggested additional signage 'requesting respect for the traditional owners and elders past and present'. Such measures are to be encouraged, and to this end perhaps the stakeholder group might consider the viability of implementing his suggestion.

Response and action: the recommendation is implemented.

Responsible agency: Department of Environment and Science (lead), supported by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Queensland Police Service and Queensland Health (Queensland Ambulance Service).

On 24 April 2020 the Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts; the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships; the Minister for Police and Corrective Services; and the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services responded:

The Department of Environment and Science through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service will continue its support and contribution to maintaining the multi-agency working group, as the lead agency and land manager of Josephine Falls within the Wooroonooran National Park.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Queensland Police Service, and Queensland Health through the Queensland Ambulance Service are represented on the working group and continue to be committed in their support of the working group.

An invitation has been extended to Local Ngadjon-ji Elders to participate as members of the working group.

Installation of additional signage requesting respect for the traditional owners and elders past and present will be considered by the working group. Existing messages on signs located at Josephine Falls will be reviewed in consultation with Local Ngadjon-Ji representatives.

On 24 September 2020 the Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts; the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships; the Minister for Police and Corrective Services; and the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services responded:

Following easing of Queensland's COVID-19 restrictions, the working group met on 6 August 2020 and discussed proposed training exercises and education programs.

The Department of Environment and Science tabled a report on the effectiveness of the Josephine Creek Flood Warning System's first year of operation from June 2019.

Training exercises are to be completed by the end of December 2020 and education programs are to be developed at further meetings of the working group.

On 8 July 2021 the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs; the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services; and the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services responded:

A half-day inter-agency training exercise was completed on 15 October 2020 to continue to refine responses to incidents at Josephine Falls, ensure sound radio communications between agencies in the field and ensure that all personnel continue to be familiar with the Josephine Falls area layout and commonly used safety and incident response procedures.

The multi-agency working group held a meeting on the 9 November 2020 and it was agreed that meetings will be ongoing and will be held quarterly. Local Ngadjon-ji Elders will continue to be invited to the working group meetings.

All data analysis confirms that the Josephine Creek Flood Warning system is operating effectively.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has reviewed signage with Uncle Ernie Raymont on behalf of the Ngadjon-ji people. Following this review, Mr Raymont advised that he is comfortable with current signage in place at Josephine Falls.