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## **Car chase victim's inquest begins in ACT**

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Police who chased a stolen car through Canberra did not see the vehicle fatally hit a 21-year-old woman despite being just five seconds behind it, an inquest has heard.

Clea Rose died from massive head injuries in August 2005, three weeks after she was hit by a car while crossing a street in the centre of Canberra.

The 15-year-old boy who was driving the car is currently serving three years detention after pleading guilty to culpable driving causing death.

The incident has raised deep concerns about police car chases in the nation's capital, but an internal police inquiry found the officers involved had acted within current guidelines.

A coronial inquest into the death has started in the ACT Magistrates Court.

Detective Sergeant Ian Faulds, a member of the ACT police's collision investigation and reconstruction team, spent several hours in the witness box, reading from a prepared statement.

It included summaries of interviews with about 50 witnesses and the accounts of the two police officers who chased the stolen car and the three teenagers involved, who cannot be named.

Det Sgt Faulds said the police involved told him they decided to pursue the Holden Commodore at about midnight on July 30, 2005, after the teenagers were spotted in a city car park looking suspicious.

Driver Constable Graeme Cooper and his passenger, Constable Con Bobolas, chased the car for about five minutes through Canberra's city centre, with siren on and lights flashing, but lost sight of the vehicle a number of times.

Det Sgt Faulds said neither officer saw Miss Rose knocked over and they did not hear of the accident until they were notified by radio several minutes later, after they had found the abandoned vehicle in the next suburb, Braddon.

Const Bobolas said he did see a puff of smoke lingering in the area, but thought it was the result of a burn-out.

CCTV footage from a cinema nearby shows the police car was only five seconds behind the Commodore moments before the accident happened, the inquest heard.

The images could not indicate the speed of the cars but witnesses said the stolen car was travelling between 80km/h and 100km/h and the police car was travelling much slower.

The speed limit in the area is 20km/h, as it is a shared zone between pedestrians, buses and taxis.

Det Sgt Faulds said the patrol vehicle had travelled through the area twice that night already, so the officers knew there were crowds of people there, common on a Friday night.

Meanwhile, the passengers in the stolen car told Det Sgt Faulds they had been drinking and smoking cannabis before the accident and had broken into three other cars that night.

But the driver said he had not consumed any alcohol or drugs.

One of the passengers said he ran to a public phone box after fleeing the stolen vehicle and reported the accident to triple-0, but Telstra records show no emergency calls from public phone boxes that night.

The inquest is expected to continue for three weeks.

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