A New South Wales Supreme Court judge has found a man who shot and killed his estranged wife in Wingham in 2010 guilty of manslaughter, but not guilty of murder.

A special hearing of the matter went before judge J Adams in October, after the accused pleaded not guilty under the provisions of the Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act 1990 pursuant s21 (3)(a).

He was arraigned before the judge as he was considered unfit to be tried and the hearing was conducted without a jury.

Judge Adams delivered his decision in late November following consideration of the evidence, which included witness statements from neighbours of the accused, police officers, details from phone calls the accused made to 000 from his upper Manning home following the shooting and the expert statements of four psychologists.

The court heard the deceased and the accused had been in a domestic relationship for a number of years, but a couple of months prior to the shooting, the deceased had ended the relationship and moved herself and her daughter to Wingham.

A number of issues were taking place between the accused and the deceased, including arguments over access to see her daughter. According to evidence at about 3pm on Saturday July 10, 2010, the accused, aged 64, arrived at the residence of the deceased and had a conversation with her before walking to his vehicle, removing a .22-250 calibre rifle and returning to the verandah where shots were fired.

He then drove home in his vehicle, Police and ambulance officers were called to the scene. The autopsy disclosed the woman suffered five gunshot wounds, and death was determined to be the result of multiple gunshot wounds.

The child was in the house at the time of the shooting.

The accused was arrested later that afternoon when police saw him driving out of Bungay Road. A rifle was found in the vehicle and they determined he was moderately affected by alcohol and had slurred speech.

Judge Adams determined that while the man was intoxicated at the time, it was highly unlikely that it was so significant to affect his memory or reasoning to render him incapable of formulating the necessary knowledge and then acting on it.

He said it was undisputed that at the time of the killing, the accused suffered from brain damage and either depression or a severe mood disorder.

He was satisfied that at the time of shooting the deceased, executive function and judgement and control to his mind, were substantially impaired by a marked abnormality of mind arising from an underlying condition.

Medical evidence presented to the court suggested the accused

Teacher’s hard work recognised

SOME teachers leave lasting impressions on students and colleagues and Neil Locker is one of those special people.

Having assisted thousands of students over the years in his capacity as Careers Adviser at both Taree and Chatham High School, Neil’s hard work has been recognised by his peers at the Lower Mid North Coast CAA.

At the recent Careers Advisers Association (CAA) Conference in Sydney Neil was honoured to be this year’s recipient of the Hilary Bolin Award, an accolade handed out every year to one Careers Adviser in NSW or the ACT.

The Hilary Bolin Award was created by the executive of the Careers Advisers Association (CAA) in 1988 to honour Hilary Bolin, following her death while she was the Careers Adviser at Carlingford High School.

Hilary was also assistant secretary of the CAA, a position she held for many years.

She was committed to the development and extension of career education in its many guises and was known as a quiet achiever who worked diligently both in her own school and behind the scenes at many a careers event.

The Hilary Bolin Award is given each year at the annual CAA Conference and is the CAA’s chance to acknowledge their own.

Neil was chosen for the award for many reasons including for lending his skills to develop an understanding and knowledge in career education with students, teachers, community members and support agencies.

As well as for his involvement on a professional level outside the school for services to other careers advisers and to the CAA; and for his selfless approach and commitment to hours beyond normal expectations to ensure that outcomes for students and teachers are worthwhile.

Recipients are nominated by their colleagues via a written submission and a modest Neil admits to having been ‘very chuffed’ when he found out he had been chosen as the 2013 recipient.

“I got a bit of a shock, I had no idea,” he said.

Neil was originally a HSIE teacher but later completed a Careers Adviser’s course and was placed at Taree High School in 1980, where he stayed until transferring to Chatham High School in 1991.

“I really love what I do,” said Neil, who has seen many changes in his sector over the years.

“It’s grown so much and there’s so many more opportunities now,” he explained.

“Technology has been a major addition but the biggest and by far the best change has been the decrease in sexism in the workforce.

“When I first started, girls were so limited with what courses were available to them and essentially we were only using half our available workforce, but now girls can do anything and that’s really great.”

80 year old tree was a noxious weed

THE recent removal of an 80-year old tree near Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) triggered community questions to Greater Taree City Council about its tree removal practice.

Council’s weeds officer requested KFC remove the tree as it had been identified as a Class 3 noxious weed.

The tree, a Chinese Cedar American hackberry “must be continuously suppressed and destroyed” as noted on the www.taree.ccc/weeds website and the NSW State Primary Industries website.

A council spokesperson said the tree had been identified as contributing to the spreading seed to bushland and waterways.

Act council is obliged to prioritise efforts to halt class 1, 2 and 3 weeds. Weeds are classified on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the worst, the spokesperson said.

“The Manning Valley is fortunate in not having any weeds in the first two classes, but class 3 weeds remain a major issue for council staff.

“A number of changes and

from the Department of Primary Industries NSW, such as the reclassification of the Tropical Soda Apple from a Class 2 to Class 1 Noxious Weed.

“Council congratulates and thanks the management at KFC for their prompt compliance in meeting the obligations of the Noxious Weeds Act.”