



CORONERS COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Inquest: Inquest into the death of Alan Frederick Cornish

Hearing dates: 24 June 2026

Date of findings: 24 June 2026

Place of findings: Coroners Court, Lidcombe NSW

Findings of: Judge Hosking, Deputy State Coroner

Catchwords: Natural death in custody

File number: 2025/336457

Representation: Coronial Advocate Assisting the Coroner: Sgt. Sam Chahrouk
Corrective Services NSW (**CSNSW**): Ms Short, solicitor
Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (**JHFMHN**): Ms Amal, solicitor

Findings: Alan Frederick Cornish died on 1 September 2025 at Long Bay Hospital, Long Bay Correctional Centre, 1300 Anzac Parade Matraville NSW 2036.

Alan died of natural causes being congestive cardiac failure with an antecedent cause of ischaemic cardiomyopathy in a background of chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and type 2 diabetes.

Recommendations: N/A

Publication orders: Non-publication orders apply to the evidence in this inquest. A copy of the orders made by Judge Hosking are available upon request from the Court Registry.

Introduction

1 Alan Frederick Cornish was born on 15 February 1948 and died in lawful custody on 1 September 2025, aged 77.

The role of the coroner

2 The role of the coroner is to make findings as to the identity of the nominated person and in relation to the place and date of their death. The coroner is also to address issues concerning the manner and cause of the person's death.¹ A coroner may make recommendations, arising from the evidence, in relation to matters that have the capacity to improve public health and safety in the future.²

3 This inquest was held pursuant to the jurisdiction conveyed by s 23 (1)(d)(ii) of the Act in circumstances where at the time of his death, Alan was an inmate receiving treatment at Long Bay Hospital, a correctional centre within the meaning of the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* (NSW).

Background

Alan's incarceration

4 On 16 August 2016 (aged 68), Alan was apprehended by NSWPF³ officers and charged with multiple offences alleged to have occurred between 1963 and 2016. Alan was refused bail.

5 On 24 May 2019 (aged 71), Alan received a 40 year term of imprisonment.

Alan's medical history

6 Alan's medical history included:

- (1) type 2 diabetes (insulin dependent)

¹ S 81 of the *Coroners Act 2009* (NSW) (**the Act**)

² S 82 of the Act.

³ NSW Police Force.

- (2) coronary ischaemic heart disease
 - (3) a prior myocardial infarction
 - (4) chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
 - (5) hypertension
 - (6) vascular dementia
 - (7) vascular retinopathy.
- 7 Given his medical history, Alan spent most of his time in custody within medical units. In May 2017, Alan suffered a heart attack in custody while housed at the South Coast Correctional Centre (**STHC**) and was transferred to Shoalhaven Hospital for medical care.

Alan's death

The period before his death

- 8 On 2 July 2025, Alan was admitted to the Cardiology Department at Prince of Wales Hospital (**PoW**). Alan was suffering with decompensated heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (**HFrEF**) after two weeks of worsening shortness of breath, lower limb and abdominal swelling and having undergone an ultrasound which showed small-volume ascites.
- 9 While at PoW, Alan suffered an unwitnessed fall with head strike after he lost his balance. A CT scan showed no acute intracranial pathology/injury. The following day, Alan developed a need for oxygen to maintain safe blood saturation levels prompting further scans of the thoracic spine and chest which showed no fractures or pneumothorax.

- 10 In the following days, Alan developed contrast nephropathy⁴ delaying his discharge. His admission was further complicated by a COVID-19 infection, requiring temporary cessation of heart-failure medications and treatment with IV Remdesivir (antiviral). Alan then developed symptoms indicative of possible aspiration pneumonia or hospital acquired pneumonia, for which oral Augmentin Duo Forte was commenced. He was also administered Ferinject (IV iron therapy) for iron-deficiency anaemia.
- 11 Alan was 'discharged' on 22 July 2025 with follow up arranged and monitoring recommended for his ongoing kidney injury and heart failure management.
- 12 On 21 August 2025, Alan was transferred from the Metropolitan Special Purpose Centre to the Aged Care and Rehabilitation Unit (ARU), due to his declining health. He was subsequently diagnosed with end stage heart failure.
- 13 Treatment options were discussed with Alan, including transfer to PoW for an ascitic tap to symptomatically manage his fluid overload. Alan declined transfer to hospital. He was recorded as 'not for resuscitation'. Alan's health continued to deteriorate over the next two weeks and was treated palliatively.
- 14 At 10:20pm on 1 September 2025, Alan was unconscious and his breathing was abnormal and continued to diminish. At 10:30pm, another nurse attended the unit to assist and Alan was not breathing. He was declared life extinct at 10:39pm.

Post-mortem

- 15 Dr Pokorny conducted an external post-mortem examination on 4 September 2025. She concluded that Alan's cause of death was ischaemic cardiomyopathy.

⁴ Disease effecting the kidneys.

Police investigation

16 The police investigation revealed no evidence of suspicious circumstances.

Statutory findings required by s 81(1)

17 As a result of considering all the documentary and the oral evidence heard at the inquest, I make the following findings:

Identity

The person who has died is Alan Frederick Cornish

Place of death

Alan died in the Long Bay Hospital

Date of death

Alan died on 1 September 2025

Cause of death

Congestive cardiac failure with an antecedent cause of ischaemic cardiomyopathy in a background of chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and type 2 diabetes.

Manner of death

Natural causes.

18 I offer my condolences to all those who miss Alan and I thank Sgt. Sam Chahrouk and Snr. Cst. Jakob Hill for their assistance in this inquest.

I close this inquest.



Judge R Hosking

Deputy State Coroner

Lidcombe
