

SOUTH



AUSTRALIA

FINDING OF INQUEST

An Inquest taken on behalf of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at Adelaide in the State of South Australia, on the 15th May 2001, before Wayne Cromwell Chivell, a Coroner for the said State, concerning the death of Ronald Allen Hampton.

I, the said Coroner, find that Ronald Allen Hampton, aged 77 years, late of Downey House, Glenside Hospital, 226 Fullarton Road, Eastwood, South Australia, died at The Royal Adelaide Hospital, North Terrace, Adelaide, South Australia, on the 22nd September 2000 as a result of respiratory failure due to severe pneumonia. I find that the circumstances of death were as follows.

1. Reason for inquest

- 1.1. On 7 September 2000, Dr Joanne Pieters, Psychiatrist, made an order pursuant to Section 12(5) of the Mental Health Act 1993 for the further detention of Ronald Hampton for a period of 21 days. Accordingly at the time of his death, Mr Hampton was ‘detained in custody pursuant to an Act or law of the State’ within the meaning of Section 12(1)(da) of the Coroner’s Act, and an inquest was therefore mandatory pursuant to Section 14(1a) of the said Act.

2. Background

- 2.1. Mr Hampton had been suffering from dementia since about 1989.
- 2.2. In 1999, Mr Hampton was admitted to Sash Ferguson House, a nursing home at Mt Barker.

- 2.3. On 4 September 2000, Dr M L Taylor, a medical practitioner from Mt Barker, made an order for the immediate admission and detention of Mr Hampton in Glenside Hospital pursuant to Section 12(1) of the Mental Health Act 1993 on the following basis:

‘Increased inappropriate behaviour with aggression to other staff and patients. Pushing staff away. Has grabbed knife and threatened staff. Known dementia illness. Recent report by Eastern Mental Health Services for Elderly People.’

(Exhibit C6)

- 2.4. Dr Taylor’s order was confirmed by Dr S E Heint, Psychiatrist, pursuant to Section 12(4) of the Mental Health Act 1993 on 5 September 2000 and on 7 September 2000, Dr Pieters made the order to which I have already referred.
- 2.5. Mr Hampton’s condition seemed to settle at Glenside Hospital, however on 18 September 2000 it was noted that he was becoming unwell and on 19 September 2000, according to the statement of Dr Balaji Motamarri, Psychiatrist:

‘... he appeared toxic, flushed and had a cough with expectoration for two days. He was transported by ambulance to the Royal Adelaide Hospital’.

(Exhibit C3a, p2)

- 2.6. Dr Motamarri made an order pursuant to Section 16 of the Mental Health Act 1993 transferring Mr Hampton to the Royal Adelaide Hospital on the certificate of Dr Tom Heint, Psychiatrist, as he required treatment for his chest infection.
- 2.7. Mr Hampton was admitted to the Royal Adelaide Hospital where he was diagnosed as suffering from pneumonia. He continued to be treated with antibiotics and steroids, but his condition deteriorated and on 22 September 2000 he died.
- 2.8. Dr Charles Mulligan, Medical Registrar, gave the opinion that Mr Hampton died from ‘respiratory failure caused by severe pneumonia’ (Exhibit C2a, p2).

3. Cause of death

- 3.1. I accept Dr Mulligan’s opinion, and find that the cause of Mr Hampton’s death was respiratory failure caused by severe pneumonia.
- 3.2. On the basis of Dr Mulligan’s opinion, I find that the cause of Mr Hampton’s death was unrelated to his detention at Glenside Hospital and the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

3.3. The investigation has revealed no ground for concern about the quality of the treatment given to Mr Hampton during his period in custody.

4. Recommendations

4.1. There are no recommendations pursuant to Section 25(2) of the Coroner's Act.

Key Words: Death in Custody

In witness whereof the said Coroner has hereunto set and subscribed his hand and

Seal the 16th day of May, 2001.

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Coroner