



FINDING OF INQUEST

An Inquest taken on behalf of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at Adelaide in the State of South Australia, on the 11th day of October 2006, and the 23rd day of November 2006, by the Coroner's Court of the said State, constituted of Elizabeth Ann Sheppard, a Coroner for the said State, into the disappearance within the said State of Skaidrite Dreiman.

The said Court finds that Skaidrite Dreiman aged 83 years, of 2/2 Oleander Street, South Brighton disappeared from Brighton Beach, South Australia and died on the 17th day of November 2003. The said Court finds that the circumstances of her disappearance were as follows:

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Skaidrite Dreiman was reported missing by her granddaughter Kyla Young, on 18 November 2003. Inquiries conducted into her disappearance indicated that Mrs Dreiman disappeared at Brighton Beach where she had gone with the intention of swimming at approximately 4:00pm that day. Family and friends who would normally expect to have heard from Mrs Dreiman, if she was still alive, have received no contact from her. Mrs Dreiman's possessions and financial accounts have remained untouched by anyone since that time, other than by authorised persons.
- 1.2. Mrs Dreiman had a long history of cardiac arrhythmia, a condition which may have caused difficulty for Mrs Dreiman when swimming at the beach. Despite extensive searches in the area relevant to her disappearance, Mrs Dreiman's body has never been located.

- 1.3. Pursuant to section 21(1)(b)(iii) of the Coroner's Act 2003, an Inquest may be held to inquire into "the disappearance from, or within, the State of any person". Accordingly, an Inquest was held to consider whether the evidence establishes on the balance of probabilities that Mrs Dreiman is dead and secondly, the cause of her death.

2. Events of Monday 17 November 2003

- 2.1. At the time of her death, Mrs Dreiman lived alone in a home unit at 2 Oleander Street, South Brighton. She was seen by her neighbour Florence Specht, who lived in the same block of units at approximately 8:15am, as Mrs Dreiman was wheeling her wheelie bin into her garage¹.
- 2.2. A lunch had been arranged that day at the Buckingham Arms Hotel for friends who were part of a charity group, known as the 'Godmothers'. Mrs Dreiman attended the lunch with her long time friend Herta Fridenbergs. Mrs Dreiman drove her red Mazda sedan to Plympton Park, picked up Ms Fridenbergs and from there travelled to Daw Park where Mrs Dreiman left her car. Brigita Kavals then drove the other two women to the Buckingham Arms Hotel at Gilberton. According to Ms Fridenbergs, Mrs Dreiman appeared happy and may have had a glass of wine with her lunch².
- 2.3. At about 3:30pm, Ms Kavals drove the two women back to her house in Daw Park and then Mrs Dreiman drove Ms Fridenbergs back to Plympton Park. According to Ms Fridenbergs, it was a warm day and yet Mrs Dreiman declined to activate the air conditioner, claiming that she enjoyed the heat. Before Ms Dreiman left Ms Fridenbergs, she invited her friend to her home the following Wednesday. Over the years, Ms Fridenbergs had come to learn that Mrs Dreiman loved the beach and seemed "obsessed with water", but on this occasion, Mrs Dreiman gave no indication that she was planning to go the beach later that day³.
- 2.4. At about 3:30pm or 3:45pm, neighbour Natalie May was in her lounge room when she recognised Mrs Dreiman reversing her red car out of the driveway of the block of units in Oleander Street. This is the last sighting of Mrs Dreiman by anyone who knew her. Ms May's estimate of time is likely to be accurate, given her explanation

¹ Exhibit C3a

² Exhibit C2a

³ Exhibit C2a

that she was having a discussion with a friend at the time about needing to go to the Motor Registration Office before closing time at 4:00pm⁴.

- 2.5. Evidence subsequently provided indicates that Mrs Dreiman had changed her clothes, took her purse from her handbag, leaving it in her bedroom and drove to her favourite location along the Esplanade at Brighton Beach, at the end of Shoreham Road intending to swim⁵. According to her granddaughter, Kyla Young, with whom Mrs Dreiman had a close relationship, Mrs Dreiman regularly attended the same location to swim. She enjoyed swimming on warm days in relatively shallow water where she generally paddled and did some breast stroke⁶.
- 2.6. Ms Young explained that her grandmother always swam with an old style bathing hat, usually a white one and that she disliked getting her hair wet⁷. The evidence suggests that she would usually swim with her head above water. Ms Young explained that her grandmother's belongings were normally placed in the same general location, near the wooden ramp at the end of Shoreham Road, partially submerged in the sand while she swam⁸.
- 2.7. The last time Ms Young spoke to her grandmother was on Sunday 16 November 2003 at which time she found her to be in good spirits, notwithstanding that at around this time of year, it was the anniversary of her second husband's death which made her sad.
- 2.8. Ms Young tried unsuccessfully to reach Mrs Dreiman by phone on a regular basis from mid morning on 17 November 2003 until about 9:00pm at which time, she began to get concerned, but didn't act on her concerns until the following day.

3. Alarm raised on Tuesday 18 November 2003

- 3.1. At about 8:45am, 18 November 2003, neighbour Florence Specht received a call from a person at the Red Cross claiming that their regular morning telecross call to Mrs Dreiman, was unanswered⁹. Because Ms Specht was listed as an emergency contact

⁴ Exhibit C1a

⁵ Transcript, page 26

⁶ Exhibit C7a

⁷ Transcript, page 20

⁸ Transcript, page 68

⁹ Exhibit C31j

person, she was contacted and requested to enter Mrs Dreiman's unit with her spare key. A message was also left by the Red Cross on Kyla Young's mobile phone.

- 3.2. When Ms Specht did as requested, she found the unit unoccupied, but otherwise in its normal state¹⁰. Although not covered in the statement provided by Ms Specht, I assume that at this time, Mrs Dreiman's vehicle was also absent from the unit complex where it would normally be parked.
- 3.3. At around midday on 18 November, 2003, Mrs Dreiman was expected for lunch at Marjory Worthley's home, but failed to arrive. Mrs Worthley had become a close friend through their former teaching days at Brighton High School. Mrs Worthley telephoned Mrs Dreiman's unit at about 1:00pm to see whether she had forgotten their arrangement, but the call was unanswered. By this time, a number of people were calling other people inquiring about Mrs Dreiman's whereabouts¹¹.
- 3.4. Brian Gallagher was an acquaintance of Mrs Dreiman, with a similar interest in swimming. Whilst he did not know her name, he knew Mrs Dreiman by sight. They would speak about various matters, including dentistry which they had both studied. He often saw her swimming in shallow water at South Brighton Beach. He has stated that between 3:00 and 4:00 pm on Tuesday 18 November 2003, he saw her red vehicle parked on the Esplanade, at the end of Shoreham Road. He also claimed that at about 3:00pm, he saw a tan or brown handbag, sandals and a towel, (similar to those ultimately identified as belonging to Mrs Dreiman), on the sand, to the right of the ramp at about the same time, but he did not make any connection between the bag and Mrs Dreiman until the following day when he was speaking to police. He did not see Mrs Dreiman anywhere during Tuesday 18 November¹².
- 3.5. Meanwhile, Kyla Young asked her brother, Brett Young to go to their grandmother's unit and check on the situation, because he lived relatively close by. At about 6:30pm on 18 November 2003, Mr Young obtained the spare key from Ms Specht and entered the unit. He noticed that his grandmother's purse was on the dressing table as well as her regular medication. Clothing and underclothing was draped over a chair which indicated to Mr Young and others subsequently that Mrs Dreiman may have changed into a swim suit and left her purse behind deliberately before going for a swim.

¹⁰ Exhibit C3a

¹¹ Exhibit C9a

¹² Exhibit C7a, C7b,C7c,Exhibit C22a

Mrs Dreiman was said to normally leave her purse at home unattended when she went swimming¹³.

- 3.6. Mr Young then proceeded to the beach and located his grandmother's vehicle parked near the ramp at the end of Shoreham Road. The vehicle was unoccupied and locked. He could see his grandmother's walking stick inside the car. Mr Young telephoned his sister and mother, Ines Parker who agreed to join him. When they arrived within about half an hour, it was dark. The police were contacted. The family searched along the beach, but found no sign of Mrs Dreiman or any other item of significance¹⁴.
- 3.7. Meanwhile, at approximately 8:00pm that evening, Ron Bayre and his young family had been at the South Brighton beach and noticed a gold coloured bag, half buried in the sand with a towel draped over it. It was located about 50 metres from the Esplanade footpath in line with Shoreham Road about 2 or 3 metres north of the access ramp. Mr Bayre could see that sand had blown onto the towel and there were seagull footprints in the sand. There had been a large number of people at the beach that evening and Mr Bayre considered that the bag may have possibly belonged to an older person who had drowned while swimming at the beach. He telephoned the police about the bag and was told to take it to the Sturt Police Station, which is what he did at approximately 8:45pm. Once he lifted the towel, he saw shoes, and other personal belongings which he placed into the bag¹⁵.
- 3.8. A missing person's report was generated after Kyla Young supplied the relevant details to police later that evening¹⁶. Additional police joined Ms Young, her mother Ines Parker and husband David Parker. A police command post was set up at the beach to coordinate police inquiries.
- 3.9. I assume that the search by family members took place after Mr Bayre had located and removed the bag from the beach. Ms Young stated that she and her brother located a yellow bathing cap that evening along a pathway to the beach about 120 metres north of the location where Mrs Dreiman generally left her bag and towel¹⁷.

¹³ Exhibit C27)

¹⁴ Exhibit C5a

¹⁵ Exhibit C6a

¹⁶ Exhibit C13a

¹⁷ Transcript, page 67-68

Ms Young marked on a map where this cap was found and explained that on reflection, this was not the type of cap that her grandmother would normally wear.

- 3.10. Ms Young also marked on a plan, the location where her grandmother invariably left her possessions when swimming. Taking into account the location of this item and the evidence from Ms Young about her grandmother's habit of wearing a different style of cap, I find it unlikely that it belonged to Mrs Dreiman. If it had been her cap, it would raise an issue as to whether she had entered the water at all before her disappearance¹⁸.
- 3.11. A request for police helicopter search assistance was denied due to an approaching electrical storm. A police vehicle was driven along the beach between Seacliff to Brighton Jetty, to look for any sign of Mrs Dreiman's body, but nothing of significance was located¹⁹.
- 3.12. Inquiries with all metropolitan hospitals and the SA Ambulance Service disclosed that Mrs Dreiman had not been admitted to any hospitals during the day or the previous day (17 November 2003)²⁰.

4. Search efforts

- 4.1. Sergeant Robert Badenoch coordinated the search efforts from the morning of 19 November 2003. By this time, police considered that Mrs Dreiman had died whilst swimming and that her body may have drifted away. A police helicopter searched an area nine nautical miles north and south of the area where Mrs Dreiman was thought to have disappeared. The search concentrated on the area between Glenelg and Marino, believed to be the most likely area of detection. The search failed to locate Mrs Dreiman's body²¹.
- 4.2. Mid-morning, the bag located by Mr Bayre was taken from the Sturt Police Station and shown to Mrs Parker who identified the items as those belonging to her mother. The items included keys for her unit and car keys which operated the red Mazda²².

¹⁸ Exhibit C30

¹⁹ Exhibit C14a, Exhibit C15a

²⁰ Exhibit C21a

²¹ Exhibit C16a, Exhibit C18a

²² Exhibit C22a

- 4.3. The following day, another helicopter search was conducted in good viewing conditions. The area between Brighton Jetty and Marino Rocks from the shore out to sea for two nautical miles was covered. It also covered between Brighton Jetty and Glenelg Jetty, Marino South to Port Noarlunga Jetty and from Glenelg Jetty to Grange Jetty, each time including the area out to sea for two nautical miles. There was no sign of Mrs Dreiman's body²³.
- 4.4. A search by police on 22 November 2003, of the esplanade between Glenelg and Seacliff revealed no sign of Mrs Dreiman's body²⁴.

5. Relevant Medical Conditions

- 5.1. Mrs Dreiman's general practitioner, Dr Ian Hamer, prepared an outline of Mrs Dreiman's relevant medical history. The major medical issues concerned a heart condition, lower back pain and depression. I will only dwell upon the heart condition and depression.
- 5.2. Heart condition
According to Dr Hamer, at the time of her disappearance, Mrs Dreiman had ongoing but controlled atrial fibrillation and was managed by Cardiologist, Dr Leon Zimmet.
- 5.3. In 1983, Mrs Dreiman presented to Cardiologist Dr Allan Calvert at the Flinders Medical Centre with atypical chest pain and rapid palpitations at intermittent intervals. She was investigated and managed with medication thereafter on a regular basis, mainly by Dr Zimmet.
- 5.4. In 1996, at age 76 years, Mrs Dreiman had a mitral valve repair to treat severe mitral regurgitation and heart failure. In the operation summary, it was noted that at that time "coronary arterial anatomy had been shown to be normal". In other words, at that time, there was no evidence of coronary artery disease. According to the medical notes received into evidence, Mrs Dreiman made a good recovery from this major surgery, but continued to have bouts of atrial fibrillation. In 2003, Mrs Dreiman presented with "prolonged pauses" and a pacemaker was implanted. Dr Hamer stated that Mrs Dreiman "was very conscious of any irregularity of her heart and complained of shortness of breath on exertion". She was prescribed the blood thinner, Warfarin

²³ Exhibit C19a, Exhibit C20a

²⁴ Exhibit C18a

and Amiodarone to regulate the heart rate, but she continued to suffer from recurrent bouts of fibrillation²⁵.

- 5.5. When Dr Zimmet last reviewed Mrs Dreiman on 12 November 2003, five days before her disappearance, he considered that the episodes of palpitations (paroxysmal episodes of atrial fibrillation) were now only occasional and were controlled by Amiodarone. He advised that Mrs Dreiman could cease Warfarin and continue with Aspirin and Amiodarone. He planned to review her again in six months²⁶.
- 5.6. According to Mrs Parker, her mother complained to her and to others in the family from time to time about having “dizzy spells”. On one occasion following the insertion of her pacemaker, she complained that she had lost consciousness for a brief period. Mrs Parker noticed that her mother was reluctant to drive her car for a while for fear of another spell²⁷. Kyla Young gave a similar account of these complaints made to her and she explained that in the last twelve months or so before her disappearance, her grandmother stopped driving lengthy distances and was unwilling to drive to Ms Young’s home, some twenty-five minutes away²⁸. I note that on the day of her disappearance, Mrs Dreiman drove considerably more than she might normally have done.
- 5.7. Dr Hamer claimed that Mrs Dreiman made no complaint of these “dizzy spells” to him²⁹. In a letter written by Dr Zimmet to Dr Hamer, dated 4 March 1998, Dr Zimmet reported that Mrs Dreiman occasionally became light-headed with her palpitations. I consider that it is possible that if Mrs Dreiman did suffer from occasional dizzy spells, they may have related to her cardiac arrhythmia.
- 5.8. In a letter prepared by Dr Zimmet following Mrs Dreiman’s disappearance, he acknowledged that Mrs Dreiman was at the time of her disappearance prone to cardiac arrhythmia. Dr Zimmet considered that it was possible that if an arrhythmia occurred whilst Mrs Dreiman was swimming, it may have caused her to drown. I accept this explanation by Dr Zimmet as a possible cause of death. One can understand that during a period of arrhythmia, it may weaken Mrs Dreiman to the point where she was unable to swim effectively. I consider that it also tends to

²⁵ Exhibit C29

²⁶ Exhibit C29

²⁷ Transcript, page 62

²⁸ Transcript, page 72

²⁹ Transcript, page 60

explain how Mrs Dreiman may have got into difficulty without being noticed by others in the water or on the beach. Whilst there was no evidence received during the Inquest concerning the possible contribution which a glass of alcohol may have made to a bout of arrhythmia in Mrs Dreiman's situation, I am aware of a general link between the two in some circumstances.

5.9. Depression

Several witnesses and family members provided evidence which I accept that Mrs Dreiman tended to complain a good deal about her health, but overall seemed relatively fit and active for her age. She tended to display a negative approach to life, particularly when in the company of her daughter Ines Parker³⁰. Dr Hamer summarised the situation as follows:

'Mrs Dreiman had had a difficult life: she had experienced suffering during the 2nd World War, her first husband left her after 34 years of marriage, she had had 4 children – 1 died as a child and 1 died aged 18 years in a MVA, her second husband died after a prolonged illness, and although she had qualified as a dentist in Latvia she had never been able to practice dentistry in Australia – a fact which she deeply regretted. She was lonely, despite some contact with at least one daughter, Ines. She had significant medical problems – her cardiac status made her anxious and she suffered ongoing and at times severe lower back pain. I notice from a discussion I had with her daughter, Ines Parker, in December 2002 that we both agreed that Mrs Dreiman had a long standing tendency to be depressed, that she had a constantly negative outlook on life and concentrated on the 'cup being empty'. She was not an easy person to deal with.'³¹

- 5.10. Dr Hamer also acknowledged that despite Mrs Dreiman's depressive type symptoms, she was a person who seemed determined to "keep going" and would consult him or other practitioners regularly about her health.
- 5.11. I accept the evidence concerning the strained relationship which had developed between Mrs Dreiman and her daughter, Ines Parker, although I note the evidence which suggests that Mrs Parker has been a devoted and attentive daughter, notwithstanding these problems. It appears that Mrs Dreiman directed her manipulative and negative side to Mrs Parker, but with most friends and acquaintances, she projected a more positive image.
- 5.12. The question arose as to whether Mrs Dreiman was depressed and unhappy enough on the 17 November 2003 to deliberately take her own life at the beach. According to

³⁰ Exhibit C27

³¹ Exhibit C29

Dr Hamer, Mrs Dreiman was a difficult patient to deal with when it came to her depression. When he prescribed anti-depressant medication, Mrs Dreiman was non-compliant³². In evidence at the Inquest, Dr Hamer explained that he did not refer Mrs Dreiman to counselling services or to a psychiatrist, because he considered from past experience that she would be uncooperative. On the last occasion he saw Mrs Dreiman on 10 November 2003, it was to deal with a minor ear and eye problem. On this occasion, Dr Hamer recalled that she appeared to be in good spirits and even brought home-made biscuits into the surgery for the staff³³.

- 5.13. Medications prescribed for pain relief and for sleeping were located at Mrs Dreiman's home after her disappearance, but in circumstances suggesting that she took these very sparingly. They would have been available to use if Mrs Dreiman wanted to end her life.
- 5.14. Mrs Parker stated that when she last spoke with her mother, it was at a family dinner at the Parker home on 13 November, 2003, at which time Mrs Dreiman appeared in good spirits. During the evening, Mrs Dreiman agreed to look after one of her daughter's dogs while she and her husband travelled interstate the following week on 19 November 2003³⁴. Mrs Dreiman was independent and active for her age and she had a number of close friends and acquaintances with whom she appeared to share happy times. Mrs Dreiman had a close relationship with her granddaughter, speaking with her several times a week.
- 5.15. Notwithstanding the evidence of Mrs Dreiman's depressive type personality, family and friends have expressed the view that she would not have intentionally taken her own life³⁵. Bearing in mind the evidence from family members, friends and from Dr Hamer and taking into account the circumstances in which Mrs Dreiman disappeared, with plans in place for the immediate future and the absence of a suicide note, I find that Mrs Dreiman did not deliberately end her life.

6. Relevant features of Brighton Beach

- 6.1. According to the then President of the Brighton Surf Life Saving Club, Peter Cockerham, Brighton Beach is generally safe for swimming. It is mainly flat with a

³² Exhibit C29, Exhibit C31

³³ Exhibit C29

³⁴ Transcript, page 29

³⁵ Exhibit C27, Transcript, page 64, Transcript, page 72

sandbar twenty and fifty metres from the shoreline at high tide. The sandbar is exposed only at low tide. During high tide, the area between the sandbar and the shore has much deeper water and poses a hazard to inexperienced swimmers, particularly during strong south west wind³⁶.

- 6.2. The evidence suggests that Mrs Dreiman may not have been confident when swimming in deeper water³⁷.

7. Weather conditions on 17 November 2003

- 7.1. Mrs Dreiman's grandson, Brett Young stated that he was a keen sailor and was aware of the conditions at West Beach in the early evening of Monday 17 November 2003. He maintained that there was an off shore breeze with a change in tidal conditions³⁸.

- 7.2. The records of the Bureau of Meteorology show that at 3:00pm on 17 November 2003, the temperature in Adelaide was 31.3 degrees. The wind was East, North Easterly at 26 kilometres per hour with Easterly wind gusts of 63 kilometres per hour³⁹.

- 7.3. According to Peter Cockerham, from the Brighton Surf life Saving Club, in these conditions, a person getting into difficulties at the beach would probably be carried out to sea in a south westerly direction towards Marino Rocks where there is very deep water⁴⁰.

8. Tidal Movement

According to Richard Keen, a swimmer who became familiar with Mr Gallagher and Mrs Dreiman over time at the beach, the week of her disappearance was marked by higher tide than usual. Mr Keen recalled warning a young mother with children, of the danger of getting into deeper water quicker than was normally the case. He speculated that after seeing the way Mrs Dreiman normally swam, she may have got out of her depth and into difficulty in such conditions⁴¹. I accept the possibility that this may have occurred, even in the absence of a bout of cardiac arrhythmia.

³⁶ Exhibit C10a

³⁷ Transcript, page 19

³⁸ Exhibit C5a

³⁹ Exhibit C31d

⁴⁰ Exhibit C10a

⁴¹ Exhibit C8a

9. No shark sightings in the Brighton Beach area

- 9.1. According to Peter Cockerham, there is no record in the Brighton Surf Life Saving patrol log of any shark sightings by members of the Club at around this time up to and including January 2004. The only known fatal shark attack at Brighton is said to have occurred in 1926, when a person jumped off the Brighton Jetty.
- 9.2. Shark Consultants, Rodney Fox and Andrew Fox provided an opinion concerning the likelihood that Mrs Dreiman was taken by a shark at Brighton Beach when swimming in her usual location. The opinion provided suggested that it would be extremely unlikely that a shark would enter the first trench at Brighton Beach, so close to the shoreline. If Mrs Dreiman's body had been floating on the surface, it is acknowledged that a great white shark may have "investigated" it, but in the opinion of the shark consultants, it is "highly unlikely that she would have been taken by a shark". An alternative explanation offered is that Mrs Dreiman may have been stung by a jellyfish, stingray or some other marine animal, causing Mrs Dreiman to panic and drown⁴². The evidence does not enable me to form a view about this alternative possible explanation.
- 9.3. I note that on the day in question, there were a number of people on the beach and that if there had been a shark attack, it would probably have been noticed by someone. I find that it is very unlikely that Mrs Dreiman died as a result of being taken by a shark at South Brighton Beach.

10. Missing person investigation

- 10.1. Senior Constable Wendy Trevilyan, (now McDonald) took over the investigation into Mrs Dreiman's disappearance in January 2004. After examining the statements from family, friends and information gathered concerning the search efforts, Senior Constable McDonald obtained bank records to examine Mrs Dreiman's accounts. Apart from authorised transactions by way of an enduring power of attorney (entered into in 1991) by Mrs Parker, Senior Constable McDonald concluded that there were no unauthorised transactions since Mrs Dreiman's disappearance.
- 10.2. Subsequent evidence from Mrs Parker and Senior Constable McDonald confirms that there have been no transactions on any of Mrs Dreiman's accounts since her

⁴² Exhibit C11a

disappearance apart from those conducted by Mrs Parker to settle accounts on Mr Dreiman's behalf. I accept the evidence on this topic from Mrs Parker and Senior Constable McDonald which is confirmed by a number of documentary exhibits⁴³. According to Mrs Parker, Mrs Dreiman's transaction card was located in her purse on the dressing table and has been in Mrs Parker's possession since that time.

- 10.3. Senior Constable McDonald explained the steps taken to investigate the disappearance of Mrs Dreiman which included an advertisement in the Advertiser on 20 November 2003, calling for witnesses to contact the Crime Stoppers phone line. According to Senior Constable McDonald, Mrs Dreiman's disappearance attracted considerable media attention. There were only four reported possible sightings from members of the public of an elderly woman generally consistent with Mrs Dreiman's appearance, but they were later discounted. It has now been three years since Mrs Dreiman's disappearance. The evidence establishes that there has been no contact with any person who would normally expect to hear from her if Mrs Dreiman was capable of making contact. I accept Senior Constable McDonald's opinion that there is no suspicious activity surrounding Mrs Dreiman's disappearance⁴⁴.

11. Presumption of Death

Having carefully considered all of the evidence, I am satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Mrs Dreiman died in the water at South Brighton beach during the afternoon of 17 November 2003. The common law presumption of death which is enlivened following a period of seven years, is not available in this case. Given the combined weight of the circumstantial evidence, I am satisfied that there is no need to wait for a seven year period to elapse for a presumption to be made that Mrs Dreiman is dead⁴⁵.

12. Cause of death

The evidence does not enable me to reach a concluded view about the cause of Mrs Dreiman's death. I consider that the most likely scenario is that either because of the prevailing tidal conditions or because of some cardiac event or a combination of

⁴³ Exhibit C28, Exhibit C27c, C27d, Exhibit C31h, Exhibit C31i

⁴⁴ Exhibit C31, Exhibit C31b, Exhibit C31c

⁴⁵ Axon v Axon (1937) 39 CLR395

the two, Mrs Dreiman was unable to continue swimming and she died in the water, either by way of a cardiac event or by drowning.

13. Sea Lice

- 13.1. Evidence was received concerning the activity of sea lice which might explain why Mrs Dreiman's body has never been recovered. Thierry Laperousaz completed a Masters in Marine Biology in Paris in 1990 and in January 2004, was employed as collection manager of marine species at the South Australian Museum. According to Mr Laperousaz, sea lice become active in November off the metropolitan coastline of Adelaide. They are scavengers which live on the bottom of the ocean in sand and around the pillars of jetties. They are said to converge on dead fish and dead humans in high density.
- 13.2. Mr Laperousaz estimated that it may take only about two days for human flesh to be eaten by sea lice, assisted by other crustaceans in the region. According to Mr Laperousaz, sea lice are very active at night and if a body is floating on the surface of the water, sea lice swim to the surface. Because the sea lice are capable of consuming cartilage, their action may result in dismantling of the skeletal remains which would scatter and disintegrate over time⁴⁶. Senior Constable McDonald confirmed the evidence from Mr Laperousaz concerning the capacity of sea lice to consume a body over a period of two days.
- 13.3. I accept the evidence of Mr Laperousaz, confirmed by Senior Constable McDonald as providing a likely explanation as to why Mrs Dreiman's body has never been recovered.
- 13.4. Having reflected upon the circumstances of Mrs Dreiman's disappearance, I decline to make any recommendations pursuant to section 25(2) of the Coroner's Act 2003.

⁴⁶ Exhibit C12a

Key Words: Disappearance; Drowning; Missing Person.

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

Seal the 23rd day of November, 2006.

Coroner

Inquest Number 28/2006 (0755/04)