



FINDING OF INQUEST

An Inquest taken on behalf of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at Adelaide in the State of South Australia, on the 7th day of October 2009 and the 4th day of June 2010, by the Coroner's Court of the said State, constituted of Mark Frederick Johns, State Coroner, into the death of Wilfred Thomas Pride.

The said Court finds that Wilfred Thomas Pride aged 93 years, late of Resthaven Nursing Home, 30 Sussex Terrace, Westbourne Park, South Australia died at the Repatriation General Hospital, Daws Road, Daw Park, South Australia on the 20th day of March 2008 as a result of ischaemic heart disease. The said Court finds that the circumstances of his death were as follows:

1. Introduction and reason for Inquest

- 1.1. Mr Pride was 93 years of age when he died on 20 March 2008. He was at that time a patient of the Repatriation General Hospital at Daw Park having been transferred from Resthaven Nursing Home on 14 March 2008. At the time of his death he was subject to a 21-day detention order pursuant to section 12(5) of the Mental Health Act 1993. His death was therefore a death in custody within the meaning of the Coroners Act 2003 and this Inquest was held as required pursuant to section 21(1)(a) of that Act.
- 1.2. A pathology review conducted by Drs McIntyre and Charlwood of Forensic Science South Australia, based upon Mr Pride's clinical history as revealed in hospital notes, stated the cause of death to be ischaemic heart disease and I so find.

2. Mr Pride's medical history and the circumstances surrounding his death

- 2.1. Mr Pride had a number of medical complaints including ischaemic heart disease, congestive cardiac failure, hypercholesterolaemia, hypertension, chronic obstructive airways disease, atrial fibrillation and pulmonary fibrosis. He also suffered from depression and anxiety. He had triple by-pass open-heart surgery in 1997.
- 2.2. In January 2008 Mr Pride suffered from urinary retention and as a result an indwelling urinary catheter was required. He suffered from an episode of delirium due to urosepsis in February 2008. In late February 2008 Mr Pride was admitted to the Repatriation General Hospital for heart related problems and was returned to Resthaven Nursing Home two and a half weeks later.
- 2.3. On 13 March 2008 he was examined at Resthaven Nursing Home by Dr Vlahos. Dr Vlahos was aware that Mr Pride had behaved aggressively towards another resident of the nursing home the previous day. He was also making threats about the other resident and refusing to take his medications and refusing food. He would not allow carers to touch him to attend to his basic needs. Dr Vlahos concluded that Mr Pride was suffering delirium, most likely caused by an infection as a result of his indwelling urinary catheter. Dr Vlahos formed the view that Mr Pride was delusional and unable to make rational decisions regarding his health. He consulted two other doctors about this, both of whom agreed with his assessment. Dr Vlahos detained Mr Pride pursuant to the Mental Health Act 1993¹.
- 2.4. Mr Pride was conveyed to the Repatriation General Hospital on 14 March 2008. He was aggressive and refused to be transferred to a bed. He punched and kicked at nurses. A consultant psychiatrist reviewed Mr Pride the following day (15 March 2008). Mr Pride did not cooperate with her attempts to conduct a mental state examination. He was shouting, screaming and being uncooperative. The psychiatrist thought that Mr Pride did not know who he was or that he was in hospital for his own welfare. As a result the psychiatrist² confirmed the detention order made by Dr Vlahos the previous day.

¹ Exhibit C23c

² Dr Rozenbilds

- 2.5. Later that day tests from a urine culture revealed an elevated white cell count and red blood count. A provisional diagnosis of a urinary tract infection was made and antibiotics were commenced.
- 2.6. Two days later, as required by the Mental Health Act, Mr Pride's detention status was again reviewed by a consultant psychiatrist, Dr Linda McCarthy. She found him to be agitated, irritable and verbally abusive and difficult to assess accurately for that reason. She formed the opinion that he was suffering from delirium, possibly secondary to a medical condition, and that he was a danger to himself because he was refusing medication. She considered that he might also be a danger to others if not medicated. She formed the opinion that his continuing detention was warranted and signed the necessary documentation³. On 19 March 2008 Mr Pride was again examined by Dr McCarthy. He complained of chest pain and stiffness in his jaw and a cardiac review was requested. Mr Pride was assessed by a cardiologist, Dr Josephine Harris, on 19 March 2008. An ECG was undertaken which revealed a left bundle branch block⁴ indicating an acute coronary occlusion. His cardiac enzymes were elevated. Because of Mr Pride's level of agitation and lack of cooperation, the cardiologist considered the option of performing an urgent angiography to be unrealistic and unfeasible. She was also aware that he had previously expressed a wish not be resuscitated in the event of cardiopulmonary event. Discussions took place with Mr Pride's daughter and she confirmed this wish.
- 2.7. Arrangements were made for Mr Pride to be given a Heparin infusion and a GTN⁵ was commenced. Morphine was prescribed for breathlessness and pain relief. By early evening on 20 March 2008 Mr Pride's condition had worsened. At approximately 1900 hours a nurse who was in constant attendance upon him noted that he gasped and then stopped breathing. A second nurse confirmed that Mr Pride was deceased.

³ Exhibit C23d

⁴ Exhibit C5a

⁵ Glyceryl Trinitrate

3. Conclusions

- 3.1. I have examined the relevant documents and considered all of the evidence following a thorough investigation by Detective Senior Constable Cox of Sturt CIB⁶. In my opinion Mr Pride's detention under the Mental Health Act was lawful and entirely necessary. His care was appropriate and thorough at all times in the Repatriation General Hospital.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. I have no recommendations to make in this matter.

⁶ Exhibit C23

Key Words: Death in Custody; Natural Causes

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

Seal the 4th day of June, 2010.

State Coroner

Inquest Number 28/2009 (0397/2008)