



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 November 2010 and the 23rd day of September 2011, by the Coroner's Court of the said State, constituted of Mark Frederick Johns, State Coroner, into the death of Stephen West Hiscock.

The said Court finds that Stephen West Hiscock aged 90 years, late of 52 Smithdorien Street, Mitcham, South Australia died at the Repatriation General Hospital, Daws Road, Daw Park, South Australia on the 24th day of June 2009 as a result of aspiration pneumonia complicating community acquired pneumonia. The said Court finds that the circumstances of his death were as follows:

1. Introduction, cause of death and reason for Inquest

- 1.1. Stephen West Hiscock was 90 years of age when he died on 24 June 2009 at the Repatriation General Hospital in Daw Park. The cause of death was determined by Dr Iain McIntyre in conjunction with Dr Carl Winskog, forensic pathologist, to be aspiration pneumonia complicating community acquired pneumonia¹, and I so find.
- 1.2. At the time of his death, Mr Hiscock was detained under the Mental Health Act 1993 at the Repatriation General Hospital. Accordingly, his death was a death in custody within the meaning of section 21(1)(a) of the Coroners Act 2003 and this Inquest was held as required by that section.

2. The circumstances surrounding Mr Hiscock's death

- 2.1. On 5 May 2009 Mr Hiscock drove his car into a tree at Northgate Street, Unley. He told Senior Constable Huxholl that he had deliberately driven into the tree because he wanted to kill himself.

¹ Exhibit C3a

- 2.2. Mr Hiscock's wife had died in 2006 and since that time he had experienced a loss of enjoyment of life. He told medical staff that he was sick of life. He was detained under the Mental Health Act 1993 by the treating medical staff and managed until his transfer from the Royal Adelaide Hospital to the Repatriation General Hospital. An X-ray showed that he had an undisplaced fracture of the sternum and was suffering from pneumonia. Appropriate treatment was instigated at the Repatriation General Hospital by the medical staff in conjunction with the psychiatric staff.
- 2.3. Mr Hiscock was treated by a team led by Dr Michael Page, consultant psychiatrist. Dr Page considered that Mr Hiscock would be suitable for ECT and, after discussing this matter with Mr Hiscock's son, an application was made to the Guardianship Board for the treatment to be instigated. The Guardianship Board made the necessary orders and treatment was administered. Initially Mr Hiscock's mood appeared to lift and his fluid and food intake did slightly increase. However, his physical health did not improve. On 24 June 2009 he was noted to have very low oxygen saturation levels. He was treated palliatively and died that afternoon.
- 2.4. An extremely thorough investigation was carried out by Detective Senior Constable Campbell Hill² in this case, and I commend Detective Hill for the diligence of his work. Detective Hill's investigation has more than amply identified the relevant issues in this matter and has revealed no deficiency in the care that was afforded to Mr Hiscock during the period of his detention and hospitalisation. The investigation has satisfied me that Mr Hiscock's care and treatment was appropriate and his detention was lawful.

3. Recommendations

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

² Exhibit C23 and Attachments

Key Words: Death in Custody

*In witness whereof the said Coroner has hereunto set and subscribed his hand and
Seal the 23rd day of September, 2011.*

State Coroner

Inquest Number 36/2010 (1023/2009)