



FINDING OF INQUEST

An Inquest taken on behalf of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at Adelaide in the State of South Australia, on the 16th day of December 2011 and the 4th day of September 2013, by the Coroner's Court of the said State, constituted of Anthony Ernest Schapel, Deputy State Coroner, into the death of Linda Edith Bugg.

The said Court finds that Linda Edith Bugg aged 92 years, late of Howard House, 200 Fosters Road, Oakden, South Australia died at Royal Adelaide Hospital, North Terrace, Adelaide, South Australia on the 24th day of October 2009 as a result of acute myocardial infarction. The said Court finds that the circumstances of her death were as follows:

1. Introduction, cause of death and reason for Inquest

- 1.1. Linda Edith Bugg was 92 years of age when she died on 24 October 2009 at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH). Mrs Bugg was brought to the RAH at about 1:10am on the day of her death. She was brought in from Howard House, Oakden¹, having experienced nausea, vomiting and hypotension. A number of tests were conducted, the results of which were highly indicative of an acute heart attack. In the event Mrs Bugg's condition deteriorated and she collapsed and eventually died in the RAH, her life being pronounced extinct at 3:58am on 24 October 2009. Given her age and general condition, her acute cardiac event was not considered to be reversible and resuscitation upon her collapse and arrest was not undertaken.

¹ Howard House is a residential facility providing transitional and extended care for older persons suffering from mental illness

- 1.2. Dr Rhea Sicat² gave a statement to police in which Dr Sicat expressed the cause of Mrs Bugg's death as cardiogenic shock secondary to inferior wall, non ST elevation myocardial infarction. The circumstances and cause of Mrs Bugg's death were reviewed by an independent forensic pathologist, Dr Neil Langlois of Forensic Science South Australia. Dr Langlois advised that an autopsy was not required to establish the cause of Mrs Bugg's death. Dr Langlois in a written pathology review³ dated 27 October 2009 expressed the cause of death as being acute myocardial infarction. This cause of death, albeit expressed slightly differently from that proffered by Dr Sicat, is essentially the same cause of death. I find the cause of death of Mrs Bugg to have been acute myocardial infarction.
- 1.3. The reason that the deceased's death was reported to the State Coroner was that at the time of her death Mrs Bugg was the subject of a detention order imposed pursuant to the Mental Health Act 1993 (MHA), since repealed and replaced with the Mental Health Act 2009. Therefore, not only was the matter of her death reportable to the State Coroner, but an Inquest into the cause and circumstances of her death was mandatory.

2. Background

- 2.1. Mrs Bugg had been residing at the Dutton Court Hostel at Elizabeth since November 2004. Unfortunately over the years Mrs Bugg developed ongoing depression that proved to be intractable to a greater or lesser degree. In the long run her depression involved attempts to take her own life that included spraying hairspray into her throat and inserting a pair of scissors into a live electric power socket. There was other evidence of suicidal ideation which in the event resulted in her detention under the MHA on 19 November 2009. A Dr Nicola Robertson who is a consultant psychiatrist at the Lyell McEwin Hospital issued the Form 1 in respect of Mrs Bugg's detention on the basis that Mrs Bugg was suffering from depression and had attempted self-harm. The form stated that Mrs Bugg required observation in a closed unit receiving treatment. The form asserted that the person should be admitted and detained in the Oakden Services for Older People, an approved treatment centre, in the interests of her health and safety and/or for the protection of other persons. This initial detention order would be confirmed by way of a Form 2 on 20 October 2009 by Dr Sally

² Exhibit C2a

³ Exhibit C3a

Rischbieth, another psychiatrist. This was imposed on the basis of Mrs Bugg's continuing depressed mood with loss of weight, her suicidal impulses and recent attempts and other relevant matters such as psychotic auditory hallucinations. Mrs Bugg would further be detained under the MHA by way of a 21 day order imposed by another psychiatrist, Dr Carol Fraser, based on the same ongoing grounds. The Form 3 in respect of the 21 day order also refers to a proposal that Mrs Bugg undergo electroconvulsive therapy.

- 2.2. It is clear in my opinion that at all material times Mrs Bugg's detention under the MHA was lawful and appropriate.
- 2.3. I have referred to the question of electroconvulsive therapy as part of Mrs Bugg's treatment. This treatment was in fact the subject of consent obtained from Mrs Bugg personally and was also the subject of approval from members of her family. It was administered by Dr Douglas Wilson, a psychiatrist, on 23 October 2010 at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The treatment was conducted at about 8:50am and concluded about 9:20am. Dr Wilson reports in his statement⁴ that the treatment was administered uneventfully. Mrs Bugg had been the subject of anaesthetic review prior to the administration of electroconvulsive therapy giving the medical all clear, as it were, for that therapy.
- 2.4. In his statement Dr Wilson says that if a patient is to experience myocardial ischaemia following electroconvulsive therapy, it generally occurs within the first minutes to one hour of that therapy. There was no suggestion that this had happened in Mrs Bugg's case with such rapidity. For that reason there does not appear to have been any connection between the electroconvulsive therapy and Mrs Bugg's subsequent heart attack. The opinion of Dr Langlois, the forensic pathologist to whom I have already referred, also states that there is no reason to believe that the death was a consequence of the electroconvulsive therapy on 23 October 2009.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. In the opinion of the Court Mrs Bugg's treatment during the course of her lawful detention was appropriate, undertaken with proper consent and was administered humanely and in good faith.

⁴ Exhibit C5a

4. Recommendations

4.1. There is no need for any recommendation to be made in respect of this matter.

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 September, 2013.

Deputy State Coroner

Inquest Number 44/2011 (1674/2009)