



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 day of July 2016 and the 12th day of September 2016, by the Coroner's Court of the said State, constituted of Mark Frederick Johns, State Coroner, into the death of Sandor Petrich.

The said Court finds that Sandor Petrich aged 76 years, late of Lerwin Nursing Home, 67 Joyce Street, Murray Bridge, South Australia died at Murray Bridge, South Australia on the 22nd day of October 2014 as a result of severe progressive Parkinson's disease. The said Court finds that the circumstances of his death were as follows:

1. Introduction and reason for Inquest

1.1. Mr Sandor Petrich, aged 76 years, died on 22 October 2014 at the Lerwin Nursing Home in Murray Bridge. Some time prior to Mr Petrich's death orders were obtained under the Guardianship and Administration Act 1993 appointing the Public Advocate as his guardian. The orders included provisions enabling the Public Advocate to stipulate where he had to be and reside. In law this meant that Mr Petrich's death was a death in custody within the meaning of that expression in the Coroner Act 2003 and this Inquest was held as required by section 21(1)(a) of that Act and for no other reason.

2. Cause of Death

2.1. The opinion as to Mr Petrich's cause of death given by Dr Iain McIntyre of Forensic Science South Australia was general inanition due to end stage Parkinson's disease¹, and I so find.

¹ Exhibit C2a

3. Background

- 3.1. Mr Petrich migrated to Australia from Hungary in 1963. It is understood that he had no known relatives in this country.
- 3.2. Mr Petrich had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in July 2005 and at the time of his death was suffering from this disease in its advanced stages, together with double incontinence, immobility, past crushed vertebrae, osteoporosis, chronic ischaemic heart disease, mild dysphasia and cognitive impairment.
- 3.3. Mr Petrich was admitted to the Lerwin Nursing Home on 15 September 2008. Prior to this he had been living alone in his home in Mannum without hot running water or refrigeration, and in virtual social isolation. Mr Petrich might be described as eccentric. He was sceptical of medications and frequently did not take the required doses when left to his own devices.

4. Mr Petrich's decline

- 4.1. By the time of his death Mr Petrich was suffering from severely advanced Parkinson's disease and required the use of soft railing on his bed to prevent him mobilising and suffering falls. He required full support for feeding, bathing and dressing, and was unable to hold a utensil such as a knife or fork, or even a pen to write with.
- 4.2. In the last weeks of his life he was moved to the palliative care section within the nursing home. Mr Petrich's condition steadily declined, with increasing rigidity and immobility, loss of speech and indifference to his surroundings. Mr Petrich died on 22 October 2014.
- 4.3. I have nothing to add.

Key Words: Death in Custody, Section 32 Powers; Natural Causes

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

Seal the 12th day of September, 2016.

State Coroner