

CORONERS COURT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF GARRY DAVID PLATTEN

[2025] SACC 28

Inquest Findings of her Honour Deputy State Coroner Kereru

13 November 2025

CORONIAL INQUEST

Examination of the cause and circumstances of the death of a man who took his own life while on home detention bail in respect of alleged sexual offending. The Inquest explored the cumulative stressors and whether there was any genuine prior opportunity for authorities to identify an intention to self-harm.

Held:

1. Garry David Platten, aged 72 years of Parafield Gardens, died at the Lyell McEwin Hospital on 22 July 2022 as a result of hypoxic brain injury due to cardiac arrest due to neck compression due to hanging.
2. Circumstances of death as set out in these findings.

No recommendations made.

Counsel Assisting: MR D EVANS

Hearing Date/s: 10/10/2025

Inquest No: 30/2025

File No/s: 1762/2022

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**INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF
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Introduction and background

- 1 Garry David Platten, who preferred to be called David, was born on 27 February 1950.¹ He married in 1972 and went on to have two children. The family lived at Parafield Gardens.²
- 2 While working in Queensland in about 2007, Mr Platten was involved in a truck accident where he sustained injuries and underwent multiple operations, including having a metal plate inserted in his arm.
- 3 A few years after the accident, Mr Platten wanted to change careers and so he studied nursing. He completed his studies and became an enrolled nurse.³ He struggled to find employment as a nurse, so he turned to caring. He worked with an agency and moved around facilities, eventually specialising in disability care.⁴ Mr Platten left this work in around 2015.
- 4 Mr Platten returned to work part-time in the transport industry just before the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵ His role related to the food industry and he was considered an essential worker, allowing him to continue work. He also took on casual gardening work, including for a number of former disability patients he had cared for.
- 5 Also, around 2020, Mr Platten began having prostate trouble.⁶ In 2021, a tumour on his bladder was found.⁷ He had a benign tumour removed at the end of 2021.
- 6 Mr Platten had never raised any mental health issues with medical professionals.⁸

Allegations of sexual assault

- 7 On 1 July 2022, Mr Platten was arrested in respect of two alleged indecent assaults and five alleged rapes by digital penetration.⁹ These allegations involved a person living with disability for whom Mr Platten had performed gardening work. Mr Platten strongly denied the allegations. He told family that the medication he was on after his prostate issues did not allow him to have an erection and so the allegations were not possible.¹⁰
- 8 After his arrest, Mr Platten was presented to the Elizabeth Police Station. The notes from his charging process record the following entry:

‘It was alleged the victim stated to police that [Mr Platten] has said that if she discloses to anyone (in particular his wife) of the offending then he will kill himself. The detainee

¹ Exhibit C1

² Exhibit C1a at [5]

³ Exhibit C1a at [7]

⁴ Exhibit C1a at [11]

⁵ Exhibit C1a at [16]

⁶ Exhibit C1b at [3]

⁷ Exhibit C6 at [7]

⁸ Exhibit C6 at [9]

⁹ Exhibit C8 at [11]

¹⁰ Exhibit C4 at [4]

doesn't deny saying this, however he was quite open with his recollection of this. The detainee stated he never intended to carry this out. The detainee states he has too much to live for, including his wife, children and grandchildren. The detainee states this was an empty comment and had no intention of ever carrying this out whatsoever. Low risk identified as a result of the detainee's forwardness and honesty. He appears calm and compliant, and is showing no acute signs of mental illness or any other mental health concerns.'¹¹

- 9 This risk was entered on SAPOL's computer system and the topic was repeated for each routine care plan review during his time in police custody.
- 10 Mr Platten was refused bail by police and was presented to the Elizabeth Magistrates Court on Monday, 4 July 2022. He was remanded in custody by a Magistrate pending the preparation of a home-detention bail enquiry report.¹² In prison, Mr Platten was identified as having a high stress score and was placed into the care of the High Risk Assessment Team (HRAT). Notwithstanding his high stress score, he consistently denied thoughts of self-harm.¹³
- 11 On 11 July 2022, Mr Platten returned to Court and was granted home-detention bail to reside at his home address.¹⁴ A further court date was set for 24 October 2022. He was released and travelled home, having his monitoring anklet fitted by Intensive Compliance officers early that evening.¹⁵ Mr Platten attended at the Elizabeth Community Correctional Centre on 12 July 2022. He told his supervisor that he was in good physical and mental health.¹⁶ Mr Platten was approved to go to work on the way home to collect his car and also to visit his lawyer's office on 19 July 2022.
- 12 Mrs Platten stated that Mr Platten appeared defeated after his release onto home-detention.¹⁷ She described him having to stop all of his activities and the confinement impacted him a lot. A friend reported that not being able to visit a community based club Mr Platten was a member of, particularly upset him.¹⁸

The events of 19 July 2022

- 13 Mr Platten was due to see his lawyer about the allegations on 19 July 2022. He told family that he was pleased to have the appointment because he felt like he finally had someone who would listen to his side of the story.¹⁹ At about 10am on 19 July 2022, Mr Platten received a call that his lawyer was unwell and was not able to meet with him on that day, rescheduling for the following week.²⁰ This was observed to upset him.
- 14 In the meantime, that morning, police issued a media release stating that a 72-year-old northern suburbs man had been charged with four counts of rape and two counts of indecent assault alleged to have occurred while the man was providing gardening services

¹¹ Exhibit C14e, page 5

¹² Exhibit C7 at [5]

¹³ Exhibit C7 at [7]

¹⁴ Exhibit C7 at [8]

¹⁵ Exhibit C7 at [13]

¹⁶ Exhibit C7 at [15]

¹⁷ Exhibit C1b at [4]

¹⁸ Exhibit C4 at [3]

¹⁹ Exhibit C1b at [6]

²⁰ Exhibit C1b at [6]

at the alleged victim's property.²¹ It did not specifically name Mr Platten, but instead identified his age and that he was from the northern suburbs.²² It ended with 'Investigators would like to speak to anyone who has been a victim of similar offending and urge them to contact police'. SAPOL stated that the purpose of the media release was to identify any other potential victims given that Mr Platten had performed gardening work for other disabled clients on a cash basis, and that they could not identify his clients through formal records.²³ Police also disclosed that there had been other reports in the preceding years about Mr Platten allegedly committing sexual misconduct with respect to vulnerable people, but no incidents were proceeded with.²⁴

- 15 At about 11am that day Mr Platten received a call from his doctor to tell him that he fully supported him in regard to the alleged rape.²⁵ Mr Platten asked how the doctor had become aware of the allegations and the doctor explained that he had heard it on the radio and in the newspaper. Soon after that, Mr Platten's daughter called to advise that there was an article on the ABC.²⁶ As a result, Mr Platten became upset and shut off. It was reported by his family that he repeatedly made comments like 'she has ruined my life' and 'it is not true'.²⁷
- 16 At about 2pm that day Mrs Platten left home to go shopping. She left a toddler that they were minding in Mr Platten's care.
- 17 Following the media release, a news reporter accessed the court file and identified Mr Platten as well as his address.²⁸ This reporter attended at his house at about 2:30pm. The reporter and her cameraman went to the front door, but they did not have their camera equipment.²⁹ She knocked on the front door and received no answer. She went to an open roller door and called out 'Garry'. Mr Platten answered from behind a fence. The reporter identified herself, stating that she was from the media and they had a brief conversation.³⁰ Mr Platten told her that the allegations were lies, that the victim had made them up and that he had lost his job as a result. He then said that he had nothing more to say to her. The reporter then left.
- 18 At 2:29pm,³¹ Mr Platten telephoned Mrs Platten and asked her to come home.³² He told her that the media had come to their house and he was upset. Mrs Platten arrived home at about 3pm. She found Mr Platten in the shed hanging from a rope. His face was blue/grey.³³ Mrs Platten struggled to physically help Mr Platten because she was trying to manage the toddler. She phoned for a neighbour, Duncan Campbell, to come and help cut Mr Platten down and then called triple zero while Mr Campbell was on the way.³⁴ The call went through at 3:01pm with an ambulance immediately dispatched.

²¹ Exhibit C5 at [2]

²² SAPOL Media Release

²³ Exhibit C14, pages 6, 15

²⁴ Exhibit C14, page 25; Exhibit C14g, page 3

²⁵ Exhibit C1b at [7]

²⁶ Exhibit C1b at [8]

²⁷ Exhibit C1b at [10]

²⁸ Exhibit C5 at [3]

²⁹ Exhibit C5 at [7]

³⁰ Exhibit C5 at [5]-[6]

³¹ Exhibit C11 at [16]

³² Exhibit C1b at [11]

³³ Exhibit C1b at [12]-[13]

³⁴ Exhibit C1b at [14]-[15]

Mr Campbell asked Mrs Platten to get a knife from the kitchen and he cut Mr Platten down.³⁵ They began CPR until paramedics arrived and took over.

- 19 The paramedics arrived at 3:06pm and found Mr Platten in asystolic arrest.³⁶ After three rounds of the Advanced Life Support algorithm, a return of spontaneous circulation was achieved.³⁷ This was sustained for 10 minutes before bradycardia and a further two cardiac arrests. CPR was performed for a further 45 minutes and a further return of spontaneous circulation was achieved and maintained. Notwithstanding this, Mr Platten remained unconscious.
- 20 Mr Platten was taken to the Lyell McEwin Hospital. Upon arrival, his prognosis was identified as guarded.³⁸ A CT scan at about 5pm found a short segment of dissection to the proximal right internal carotid artery with overlying bruising. Mr Platten was then taken to the Intensive Care Unit.
- 21 Mr Platten remained intubated and sedated in the Intensive Care Unit until it was identified that he was not going to regain consciousness. A family meeting was held on 22 July 2022 and a decision was made to extubate him.³⁹ This occurred at 2:30pm. Mr Platten was declared life extinct at 2:50pm on 22 July 2022.⁴⁰ He was 72 years old.

Cause of death

- 22 A post-mortem examination was conducted by forensic pathologist, Dr Karen Heath. Dr Heath found a parchmented ligature mark around the neck. A CT scan revealed no evidence of any acute injury or acute natural disease. Dr Heath concluded that Mr Platten's death was as a result of hypoxic brain injury due to cardiac arrest due to compression of the neck due to hanging.⁴¹ I find that to have been the cause of Mr Platten's death.

Reason for Inquest

- 23 Mr Platten's death was the subject of a mandatory Inquest pursuant to section 21(1)(a) of the *Coroners Act 2003* as Mr Platten had been in custody on home detention bail at the time of his death. There are no concerns in relation to the lawfulness of that custody.

Opportunities to prevent death

- 24 The first issue to be considered is the manner of dealing with the suicidal comment raised during the charging process. This was positively explored with Mr Platten. He told police that it was an empty threat and I observe that threats of this nature often form part of allegations of sexual assault where a perpetrator seeks to ensure a victim's silence. The notes made in the charge records establish that Mr Platten was able to convince the officers that the threat was not genuine after they probed the issue. Given all of the circumstances, it was reasonable to reach that conclusion and there is no criticism to be

³⁵ Exhibit C4 at [19]

³⁶ Exhibit C16, SAAS Patient Clinical Record

³⁷ Exhibit C14h; Exhibit C16

³⁸ Clinical Record 19 July 2022 at 1725 hours

³⁹ Clinical Record 22 July at 1230 hours

⁴⁰ Exhibit C9 at [45]

⁴¹ Exhibit C2a, page 2

made of the officers for dealing with the issue as they did. Of course, Mr Platten did not take his life while in the care of police and indeed not for some time after and following publication of his legal circumstances, meaning that this time with police was not an opportunity to have prevented his death in any event.

- 25 In respect of Mr Platten's care in custody, given it was his first time in prison, it was appropriate to place him in the care of the High Risk Assessment Team. He was specifically monitored for suicidal ideation and none was identified. He was then released into custody at home under the care of the Department for Correctional Services and, following specific questioning, no suicidal ideation was identified. I reiterate that he did not take his life until after his release and so there was unlikely to have been any genuine opportunity to prevent his death at this time.
- 26 Mr Platten then experienced a number of cumulative stressors. These were largely brought about by SAPOL's decision to issue a media release about him. I received a copy of the media release into evidence. It merely calls for information and makes no disrespectful or presumptuous remarks. The calling for information from the public is an important role in many police investigations and, in my view, it would be against the public interest for police to be restricted in making such public calls where appropriate. In the present matter, I consider that it was appropriate for SAPOL to call for any further complainants to come forward, given that Mr Platten had prior allegations made against him and was conducting gardening work for an unknown number of potentially vulnerable clients. I consider that it was appropriate to issue the media release notwithstanding Mr Platten's apparent response to it.
- 27 In respect of the attendance of the reporter, again, this was done in a respectful manner and Mr Platten was left in peace when he indicated that he had nothing to say to the media. I consider that there is nothing inherently wrong in identifying through investigative journalism the identity of a person alleged of a crime and asking them if they wish to provide public comment. It is true that Mr Platten was not at liberty to leave his residence to escape the media, but that concern did not arise given that the reporter left when he indicated that he did not wish to provide comment.

Conclusions

- 28 In respect of the medical care provided by paramedics and the hospital, the medical records establish comprehensive efforts to revive Mr Platten and when return of spontaneous circulation was achieved, to stabilise him. Upon review of those materials, I consider that the medical efforts were thorough and commendable in the circumstances.
- 29 The conclusion that I therefore reach is that Mr Platten's death was as a result of hypoxic brain injury due to cardiac arrest due to compression of the neck due to hanging which was a self-harm act brought about by cumulative stressors in Mr Platten's life. There was no opportunity to have prevented his death.
- 30 In light of the evidence and my consideration of the issues, I make no recommendations.

Keywords: Death in Custody; Home Detention Bail; Hanging