

FORM 37

Rule 60(1)

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Court reference: 3266/11

Inquest into the Death of UNKNOWN SKELETAL REMAINS

Delivered On: 26th October, 2011

Delivered At: Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Hearing Dates: 26th October, 2011

Findings of: CORONER KIM M W PARKINSON

Location: Melbourne

Police Coronial
Support Unit (PCSU): Leading Senior Constable King Taylor

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In the Coroners Court of Victoria at Melbourne

I, KIM PARKINSON, Coroner

having investigated the death of:

Details of deceased:

Unidentified

Human Remains: UNKNOWN HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 26th October, 2011
at Melbourne

Find: that the identity of the deceased person/s was unknown

That: the death occurred at an unknown date

At: an unknown location

From: an unknown cause

In the following circumstances:

1. The death/s was reported to the coroner on 31 August 2011. An inquest was conducted on 26 October 2011.
2. A representative of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria ("AAV") handed a box containing human skeletal remains to a member of Victoria Police at Ballarat. The skeletal remains had been discovered in a box at an AAV equipment storage facility located at Salmon Street, Port Melbourne on 14 May 2011. The remains were considered to have been part of a teaching set and used for teaching purposes.
3. The statement of Mr Aaron McGifford, Senior Heritage Program officer with AAV is that the remains may have been donated to the Victorian Archaeological Survey ("VAS") in the 1970's or 1980's by a retired medical practitioner. There is however no specific record of the donation or of the genesis of the remains.

4. The remains were held originally by VAS at its laboratory and subsequently transferred to AAV and stored at AAV facilities. It appears that in 2006, the remains were placed in the store located at Port Melbourne. They have recently been located at that facility and handed to police as described. On 31 August, 2011, the investigating police officer, Senior Constable Troy Wickham arranged for the remains to be conveyed to the Coroners Court of Victoria.

5. On 2 September 2011, the remains were examined by forensic anthropologist, Dr Soren Blau. Dr Blau reported that the remains comprised remains from at least two individuals, male and female. The majority of the bones were adult, however three juvenile bones were present. It was not possible to provide a more definitive age range.

6. Nor was it possible for the forensic anthropologist to identify the exact time since death or comment upon the ancestry of the remains. AAV archaeologist and physical anthropologist and manager of Heritage Operations, Mr David Clarke, has advised that the remains are not in his view of Australian aboriginal ancestry. This advice was based upon skeletal morphology and condition and did not involve metrical or non-metrical analysis.

7. Dr Blau was unable to provide an estimation of the time since death, however she stated that evidence of articulation and annotation were apparent on some skeletal elements and this suggested that the remains had formed part of a teaching set.

8. Having regard to the period of time in which they have been stored at VAS and AAV facilities and the use to which they were previously put as anatomical specimens, it is likely that the death of the person or persons to whom the remains relate, took place in excess of 50 years prior to 31 August, 2011.

9. I am satisfied that no further investigation is required. On the available evidence it is not possible to make findings as to identity, where, when or in what circumstances the person/s died.

10. I order that as no person, including Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, makes claim to recovery or return of the skeletal remains, that they be released by the Coroner's Court of Victoria for cremation at an approved facility and location.

Signature:



Kim M W Parkinson
Coroner



26th October, 2011