

IN THE CORONERS COURT  
OF VICTORIA  
AT MELBOURNE

Court Reference: COR 2013 5194

**FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST**

*Form 37 Rule 60(1)*

*Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008*

**Inquest into the Death of: SUSANNE MAREE DEEKER**

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Delivered On:                | 17 July 2014  |
| Delivered At:                | Coroners Court of Victoria<br>Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street<br>Melbourne 3000 |
| Hearing Date:                | 17 July 2014  |
| Finding Of:                  | AUDREY JAMIESON, CORONER  |
| Police Coronial Support Unit | Leading Senior Constable Stuart Hastings  |

I, AUDREY JAMIESON, Coroner having investigated the death of **SUSANNE MAREE DEEKER**

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 17 July 2014

at MELBOURNE

find that the identity of the deceased was **SUSANNE MAREE DEEKER**

born on 7 October 1949

and the death occurred on 13 November 2013

at Rosebud Hospital, 1527 Point Nepean Road, Rosebud 3939

**from:**

1 (a) ASPIRATION PNEUMONIA IN THE SETTING OF DOWN SYNDROME AND  
RECENT SEIZURES

**in the following circumstances:**

1. On 17 July 2014, a mandatory inquest under section 52(2)(b) of the *Coroners Act 2008* (Vic) (the Act) was held into the death of Ms Susanne Maree Deeker, because immediately before her death, Ms Deeker was “a person placed in...care” as it is defined in the Act. Ms Deeker had Down Syndrome and had been a client of the Department of Human Services (DHS) prior to her death.

## **BACKGROUND AND CIRCUMSTANCES**

2. Ms Deeker was 64 years of age at the time of her death. She lived at a supported care facility operated by the DHS located at 242 Jetty Road, Rosebud (the residence). Ms Deeker had lived at the residence for twelve years and previously with her parents.
3. Ms Deeker had a past medical history that included Down Syndrome, epilepsy, hypothyroidism, anaemia, asthma, Alzheimer’s disease, and gastro oesophageal reflux disease. She was diagnosed with dementia in 2011 after a progressive cognitive decline. Ms Deeker’s dementia rapidly deteriorated in the six months prior to her death. She experienced hypotensive collapses and recurrent chest infections requiring hospitalisation. She developed blindness in her right eye following an infection that required surgical intervention on 21 October 2013, after which her health and cognitive status appeared to deteriorate. Thereafter, she was unable to attend her day placement due to increased confusion.

4. In August 2013, Ms Deeker experienced her first seizure and was treated at the Rosebud Hospital.
5. At approximately 7.50pm on 5 November 2013, Ms Deeker was taken by ambulance to Rosebud Hospital Emergency Department (ED) after another seizure event when she collapsed in the bathroom of her residence. She was observed in the ED and discharged back to her residence at 1.45am.
6. At approximately 9.00pm on 7 November 2013, Ms Deeker was transported from her residence to the Rosebud Hospital ED with a cough and shortness of breath. It appears that she may have experienced another seizure event whilst in the ambulance. She was admitted to Rosebud Hospital with a diagnosis of aspiration pneumonia and treated with antibiotics. On 13 November 2013, a medical emergency team (MET) call was made in response to her increasing respiratory distress. After discussions with Ms Deeker's family, a decision was made not to provide resuscitative treatment to her in the event of an arrest. Ms Deeker died at 11.03pm on 13 November 2013.

#### **FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST EXAMINATION AND EVIDENCE**

7. Dr Kate Strachan, Forensic Pathologist at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, performed an external examination upon the body of Ms Deeker, reviewed a post mortem CT scan and reviewed the Victorian Police Report of Death, Form 83. Anatomical findings included cerebral atrophy, minor coronary artery calcification and increased lung markings particularly involving the right upper lobe and both lower lobes. Dr Strachan ascribed the cause of Mr Deeker's death to aspiration pneumonia in the setting of Down Syndrome and recent seizures.

#### **POLICE INVESTIGATION**

8. The circumstances of Mr Deeker's death have been the subject of investigation by Victoria Police. Police obtained statements from Ms Deeker's General Practitioner, Dr Mandar Gokhale, the Rosebud Hospital Patient Services Manager, and the DHS residence Acting House Supervisor.

#### **FACTORS CAUSING OR CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH**

9. The evidence supports a conclusion that Ms Deeker died on 13 November 2013 and that the cause of her death was aspiration pneumonia in the setting of Down Syndrome and recent seizures. The circumstances under which Ms Deeker died were, according to the forensic

pathologist, consistent with Ms Deeker's relevant past medical history. There was no evidence to suggest any other cause or contribution to her death. Ms Deeker died from natural causes related to her underlying seizure disorder and the development of aspiration pneumonia.

## **COMMENTS**

Pursuant to section 67(3) of the **Coroners Act 2008**, I make the following comment(s) connected with the death:

In all the circumstances, I am satisfied that there would be no benefit from conducting a full inquest into Ms Deeker's death or obtaining any further medical or other evidence, as neither would assist me to further understand the medical issues before me or the cause of Ms Deeker's death which resulted from natural causes in the context of her underlying seizure disorder and the development of aspiration pneumonia.

## **FINDING**

I accept and adopt the medical cause of death as ascribed by Dr Kate Strachan and I find that Susanne Maree Deeker died from natural causes being aspiration pneumonia in the setting of Down Syndrome and recent seizures.

AND I further find that there is no relationship between the cause of Ms Deeker's death and the fact that she was "a person placed in care".

Pursuant to section 73(1) of the **Coroners Act 2008**, I order that the following be published on the internet.

I direct that a copy of this finding be provided to the following:

Ms Janet Deeker

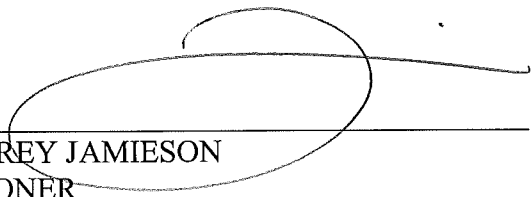
Dr Mandar Gokhale, South Coast Medical

Mr Dan McMahon, Patient Services Manager, Rosebud Hospital

Ms Robyn Reid, Acting House Supervisor, 242 Jetty Rd Group Home, Department of Human Services

Leading Senior Constable D Riddle

Signature:



AUDREY JAMIESON  
CORONER  
Date: 17 July 2014

