

IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

Court Reference: COR 2000 / 3635

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Form 37 Rule 60(1)

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Inquest into the Death of: ADAM JOHN MATTHEWS

Delivered On: 20th December 2013

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

Hearing Dates: 2nd December 2013

Findings of: JOHN OLLE, CORONER

Police Coronial Support Unit Sergeant David Dimsey

I, JOHN OLLE, Coroner having investigated the death of ADAM MATTHEWS

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 2 December 2013
at Melbourne

find that the identity of the deceased was ADAM JOHN MATTHEWS

born on 23 June 1975

and the death occurred between 24 October and 4 November 2000

at a place unknown

from:

1 (a) STAB INJURY TO THE NECK

in the following circumstances:

1. Adam Matthews was aged 25 years at the time of his death. He lived at 4/11 Queens Parade, Fawkner.
2. The coronial brief is comprehensive and has fully addressed the tragic circumstances of Adams death.¹

At Inquest

3. At inquest, Detective Sergeant Paul Tremain of the Homicide Squad provided summary of evidence. I am satisfied the summary accurately reflects the contents of the brief.
4. I note the Homicide investigation is ongoing.
5. Adam's mother Gayle expressed her gratitude to the Homicide Squad for their on-going commitment to solve the circumstances of Adam's death. I endorse Gayle's comments.

Personal Circumstances

6. Adam was second eldest of five children to Gayle Little and Thomas Matthews.
7. As a child, Adam lived in Braybrook attending Christ the King Primary school. At 11 – 12 years, the family moved to Myrning. Some 3 years later Adam's parents separated. Adam remained with his father, his mother and Adams siblings moved to Diggers Rest.

¹ A copy of the brief will remain with the court file

8. The fracture of the family unit had devastating consequences for Adam. His behaviour deteriorated, his schooling suffered, culminating in his placement in a boys home. He soon dropped out of school and became entrenched in the world of illicit drugs.
9. In 1996, whilst living as a 'street kid', Adam commenced a relationship. A son, Jake was born in December 1996. Due to his subsequent periods of incarceration, Adam saw Jake on a few occasions whilst in prison, thereafter had no further contact.
10. In early 2000, Adam discovered he had cancer of the lower left leg and rib on his left side. Despite the urging of his treating physician and mother, he refused to receive chemotherapy or undergo surgery to ascertain the extent of the cancer. Apparently fearful of a poor diagnosis, Adam substantially increased his use of illicit drugs.

Circumstances

11. Due to the on-going nature of the homicide investigation, I do not propose to detail the events leading to Adam's death. Rather, his body was found in the following circumstances:

"On Friday 3rd November, 2000, at approximately 11.00 pm, tenants at the Chinamans Bridge Caravan Park, Nagambie, observed an object floating about 10 metres from the bank of the Goulburn River. The residents dismissed this object as rubbish that had become entangled in the branches of a tree that had previously fallen into the water.

On the morning of Saturday 4th November 2000, tenants again noticed the object and requested two boys who had been rowing a boat on the river to try and dislodge it. They used an oar to try and push it away but it would not shift. They became increasingly suspicious due to the objects shape and notified police who extricated it.

A preliminary examination revealed it to be a body wrapped in external shrouds and plastic bags. The body had been weighed down with bricks. The body was conveyed to the Coronial Services Centre for further examination."²

Post Mortem Medical Examination

12. On the 5th November 2000, Dr Michael Burke, Senior Forensic Pathologist at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine performed an autopsy on the body of Adam Matthews.
13. Dr Burke found the cause of death to be stab injury to the neck.

² Summary coronial brief

14. Dr Burke commented:

“Mr Adam Matthews was a twenty five year old man whose decomposed remains were found in Nagambie Lake. His body had been wrapped in a number of coverings, secured with wire and rope and weighed down with bricks.

Post mortem examination showed multiple stab and incised like injuries.”³

15. Dr Burke further commented the injury to the left side of Adam’s head was suggestive of a sharp implement, (heavy in nature) which Dr Burke considered suggestive of an implement such a machete or tomahawk.

16. Dr Burke commented that the injuries to Adam could be interpreted as “defensive” in nature.

17. In respect to Adam’s diagnosis of cancer, for which Adam refused treatment, I note Dr Burkes comments:

“At the time of the post mortem examination it was indicated that Mr Matthews may have had a malignant tumour of lower limb bones. The medical records were sought and showed that a fine needle aspirate of a left groin lymph node suggested metastatic melanoma. The lymph node was excised and showed features consistent with metastatic melanoma.”⁴

18. Post mortem toxicology analysis revealed the presence of alcohol and amphetamines.

19. I offer Gayle and members of Adam’s family my sincere condolences and share her desire that the person or persons responsible for Adam’s death are brought to justice.

Finding

I find the cause of death of Adam Matthews to be stab injury to the neck.

³ Dr Burkes post mortem report

⁴ Paragraph 8 Dr Burkes comment section finding

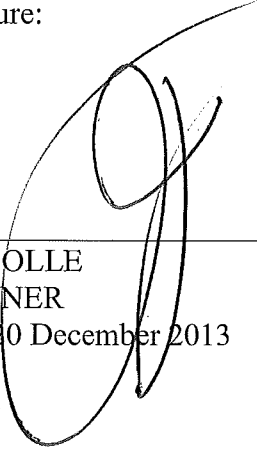
I direct that a copy of this finding be provided to the following:

Mrs Gayle Little

Detective Sergeant Paul Tremain, Homicide Squad, Victoria Police

Detective Senior Constable McCann, Investigating Member of Victoria Police

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

JOHN OLLE
CORONER
Date: 20 December 2013

