

FORM 37

Rule 60(1)

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Court reference: 252/11

Inquest into the Death of GEOFFREY REGINALD BRAGGE

Delivered On:	30 March 2011
Delivered At:	Melbourne
Hearing Dates:	30 March 2011
Findings of:	CORONER K.M.W. PARKINSON
Place of death/ Suspected death:	Unascertained
PCSU:	Leading Senior Constable King Taylor

FORM 37

Rule 60(1)

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Court reference: 252/11

In the Coroners Court of Victoria at Melbourne

I, KIM PARKINSON, Coroner

having investigated the death of:

Details of deceased:

Surname: BRAGGE
First name: GEOFFREY

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 30 March 2011

at Melbourne

find that the identity of the deceased was GEOFFREY REGINALD BRAGGE
and death occurred on or after 31 August 1971

at an unknown location

from

1a. AMYLOBARBITAL OVERDOSE

in the following circumstances:

1. Pursuant to s77 of the Coroner's Act 2008, I have reopened Case Number 0544 of 1972 where an inquest was conducted on 21 July 1972 into the circumstances of the death of a person whose body was located on 17 February 1972 in the Yarra River near the footbridge East of Gipps Street, Abbotsford. Owing to decomposition an identification was not possible. Dental records were made at the forensic examination.
2. The coroner found that the remains were unable to be identified and that the unknown male died from an overdose of amylobarbitol in unknown circumstances and that death occurred at an unknown location on an unknown date. The coroner was unable to conclude as to how the body came to be in the river.
3. Application was made by Victoria Police Senior Constable Creed to re-open the finding in inquest case number 544 of 1972.

4. I have heard the summary of the investigations undertaken by the Belier Task force and in particular the circumstances which lead them to believe that the remains in case number 0544 of 1972 were the remains of Mr Geoffrey Bragge.

5. Mr Bragge was first reported missing on 3 January 1971 by his partner, Ms Lorna Armstrong, when he disappeared after they had an argument. He was reported to have been suffering with psychiatric illness and had been known to make previous attempts on his own life. Ms Armstrong did not see Mr Bragge after that date.

6. On 10 May 1971 he was recorded as having been remanded in custody at Carlton Magistrates Court for a psychiatric examination. He was released from custody on 7 June, 1971. On 21 August 1971 he was found unconscious at his residence at 113 Clarke Street, Northcote following an overdose of amytal and valium. He was resuscitated and admitted to ICU at St. Vincent's Hospital. He was then transferred to the psychiatric unit for observation and treatment. He was diagnosed with depression and schizoid personality disorder.

7. On 31 August 1971, Mr Bragge was discharged from the hospital for review as an outpatient. He has not been seen or made contact with any known person since that date. There has been no court, hospital, banking or medicare recording of activity in his name and there are no public records which indicate any activity on his part or behalf since 31 August 1971.

8. There are a number of factors which suggest that the remains may be those of Mr Bragge. Mr Bragge attempted overdose with amytal a drug with similar properties to that which the original coroner determined was the cause of death, amylobarbitol. These drugs are known to be utilised for the treatment of anxiety and sleep disorders. Mr Bragge had been known to have made previous attempts upon his own life by drug overdose.

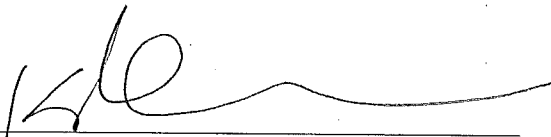
9. There are physical similarities between the unidentified remains and Mr Bragge. There is a similarity of height and build and although the remains were significantly decomposed, a dental post mortem was performed by pathologist Dr Dallitz who reported that the age of the male was between 25 - 30 years, there was a chipped front tooth and the upper right lateral incisor was a very small tooth. Mr Bragge's dental records are not inconsistent with those recorded by the pathologist in 1972. Dr Christopher Hill, Forensic Odontologist with the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine examined the dental records reported on autopsy against photographs of Mr Bragge and reported that there were similarities between the dentition and that of Mr Bragge although he was unable to make a positive identification.

10. The advanced level of decomposition described by the examining pathologist in 1972 is commensurate with the remains having been exposed to weather and water for several months. DNA examination was not then available and at the time there was no co-matching of reported missing persons against the remains. Whilst the location of the remains is known and there is a

possibility of scientific testing, the remains have been buried beneath a tree which has over the years become substantial. Consequently it is an extensive exercise to exhume and such an exhumation may not result in viable samples being available for testing. Having regard to these factors police have not made an application for exhumation and I am satisfied that is the appropriate course.

11. I have directed that the finding in case number 544 of 1972 be set aside in part in so far as the identification of the remains is concerned and the date of death. Having regard to the available evidence and on balance of probabilities, I am satisfied that the remains which are the subject of inquest no 544 of 1972 are those of Mr Geoffrey Bragge born 26 May 1945 and that death occurred on or after 31 August 1971. I am unable to conclude on the evidence as to any other matter connected with the death, including whether the overdose was accidental or intentional. I order that a copy of this finding be placed on the files.

Signature:



Kim M.W. Parkinson
Coroner
30 March, 2011

