

IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

Court Reference: 897 / 2011

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Form 37 Rule 60(1)

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Inquest into the Death of: JOHN HARWOOD

Delivered On:	7 May, 2012
Delivered At:	Coroners Court of Victoria Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street Melbourne 3000
Hearing Dates:	7 May, 2012
Findings of:	JOHN OLLE, CORONER
Police Coronial Support Unit	Sergeant Tracy Weir

I, JOHN OLLE, Coroner having investigated the death of JOHN HARWOOD

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 7 May, 2012

at MELBOURNE

find that the identity of the deceased was JOHN HARWOOD

born on 15th March 1945

and the death occurred on 9 May 2011

at Austin Hospital, 145 Studley Road, Heidelberg 3084

from:

- 1a. PNEUMONIA
- 1b. ASPIRATION

in the following circumstances:

1. John Harwood was aged 65 years at the time of his death. He lived in a Community Residential Unit, Department of Human Services at 50/52 Crispe Street, Reservoir.
2. The coronial brief has fully addressed the circumstances of death.¹ At inquest, Sergeant Weir read a summary of evidence which accurately sets out the circumstances of Mr Harwood's death.
3. The Health Medical Investigation Team (HMIT)² has reviewed the medical management of Mr Harwood.

Summary of Medical Issues:

4. Mr Harwood was a 65yo man with a history of Downs syndrome. Following a hip replacement at the John Fawkner Hospital in 2005, Mr Harwood had ongoing problems with

¹ The coronial brief will remain on the court file.

² The role of the Health and Medical Investigation Team (HMIT) is to assist the Coroner's investigation into the nature and extent of deaths, which occurred during the provision of healthcare and identify potential system factors in healthcare related deaths. HMIT personnel comprise of practising Physicians and Clinical Research Nurses who draw on their medical, nursing and research experiences, skills and knowledge, to independently evaluate clinical evidence for the investigation of reportable healthcare deaths and to assist in identifying remediable factors that may assist in prevention and risk management in health services settings.

infection of the right hip around prosthesis. After operations in February 2011 to remove the prosthesis and clear the infection, there were many difficulties with feeding, necessitating nasogastric feeding which proved unsuccessful, culminating in a decision not to institute more invasive feeding measures.

5. During this period Mr Harwood suffered many episodes of aspiration of gastric contents, ultimately leading to aspiration pneumonia. This in combination with the prolonged difficulty in feeding led to palliative care referral. He was kept comfortable and died from his respiratory condition. Medical management was of a high standard throughout, and difficult ethical decisions were confronted transparently and with appropriate consultation.
6. HMIT identified no issues of concern in the medical management of Mr Harwood.

Post Mortem Medical Examination

7. On 16 March 2011 Dr Michael Burke, Forensic Pathologist at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, performed an autopsy on the body of John Harwood. Dr Burke found the cause of death to be pneumonia and aspiration.
8. Dr Burke made the following comments:

“Mr John Harwood was a 65 year old man with a history of Down syndrome. Mr Harwood had been in palliative care since the 8th day of March 2011. He had an episode of aspiration with associated aspiration pneumonia.

The post mortem examination showed no evidence of any injury that would have contributed to or led to death.

The post mortem examination showed pneumonia with consolidation of the left lower lobe.

There is no evidence to suggest that death was due to anything other than natural causes.”

Finding

I find the cause of death of John Harwood to be pneumonia and aspiration.

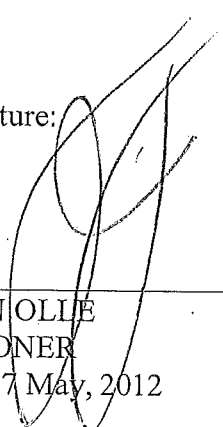
I direct that a copy of this finding be provided to the following:

Senior Next of Kin

Constable Paul Butcher, Heidelberg Police Station, Investigating Member

Department of Human Services

Signature:



JOHN OLLIE
CORONER
Date: 7 May, 2012

