

FORM 37

Rule 60(1)

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Court reference: 234/07

Inquest into the Death of MELVA JEAN STAFF

Delivered On:	28 JULY 2011
Delivered At:	MELBOURNE
Hearing Dates:	28 JULY 2011
Findings of:	CORONER K. M. W. PARKINSON
Place of death/ Suspected death:	UNASCERTAINED
Counsel Assisting:	LEADING SENIOR CONSTABLE KING TAYLOR

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Court reference: 234/07

In the Coroners Court of Victoria at Melbourne

I, KIM PARKINSON, Coroner

having investigated the death of:

Details of deceased:

Surname: STAFF
First name: MELVA
Address: Centre Road, Yellingbo, Victoria 3139

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 28th July, 2011 at Melbourne

find that the identity of the deceased was MELVA JEAN STAFF and death occurred on or about 19th July, 1981

at Melbourne

from
1a. UNASCERTAINED

In the following circumstances:

1. This is my finding in the inquest into the presumed death of Mrs Melva Jean Staff, date of birth 13 July 1926, who disappeared in the early hours of 19 July 1981. An extensive brief of evidence has been provided to the coroner in this matter, with extensive investigations being undertaken by Victoria Police Belier Task both in Victoria and interstate and enquiries in relation to the whereabouts of Mrs Staff, who has not been sighted since her disappearance on 19 July 1981. Mrs Staff was reported missing to police on 19 July 1981 by her son, Mr Edwin Munro. Probate was granted by the Victorian Supreme Court on 8 December 1988. There has been no previous inquest or finding as to the death or circumstances of Mrs Staff's death by this court.

2. Mrs Staff had been babysitting for her son, Mr Edwin Munro at his home at Launching Place on the evening of 18 July 1981. Mr Munro reported that she left his home sometime after midnight in her White Holden Commodore motor vehicle intending to travel to her home at Centre Road, Yellingbo. At 12.20am on 19 July, she was checked by the Lilydale Police driving in a Westerly direction. She was intercepted by police as she was driving very slowly. She advised police that she was travelling to her mother's home at Wandin. At 8.00am, she was seen by a witness to be bogged outside the driveway of premises at 2 Sunnyside Road, Kallista. The witness, who was the property owner, assisted Mrs Staff by towing her car and providing her with directions to her home. Mrs Staff proceeded in the opposite direction.

3. At 10.30am, Mrs Staff was again located in a similar predicament in McCarthy Road, Olinda, by Mr John Keefe and Mr Steven Cheater, off duty CFA officers driving a four wheel drive vehicle. They towed her vehicle from the bog and described that whilst she appeared slightly distressed, Mr O'Keefe was not overly alarmed at her state of mind.

4. At approximately 2.00pm, a woman matching the description of Mrs Staff was observed by Mr Michael Cass to be walking along Chalet Road, Olinda. Mr Cass described clothing similar to that worn the previous evening by Mrs Staff. Mrs Staff has not been seen since that time. Her motor vehicle was located bogged and abandoned on a secluded track between McCarthy and Chalet Roads, Olinda. Extensive police search was undertaken of the area to no result. The weather at the time of her disappearance was extremely cold. Mrs Staff's remains have never been located.

5. Mrs Staff was a person who was close to her family and would have made contact were she alive. She had recent surgery for an intracerebral tumour and was still undergoing review and investigations for the condition at the time of her disappearance. Her eyesight had further deteriorated. Medical material on the brief suggests that her prognosis was uncertain and that the development of the tumour was uncertain and required further monitoring. It is possible that she was confused or disoriented on the day of her disappearance and that this was associated with the diagnosed brain tumour.

6. Whilst there is some mention of suicide in the materials, there is insufficient evidence to make such a finding.

7. An application for administration of the Estate of Mrs Staff was made to the Supreme Court in 1988. Extensive affidavit material supporting that application is contained on the inquest brief and I have considered that material. A Grant of Probate was been made by the Supreme Court of Victoria in 1988 and a declaration of presumed death made.

8. Having considered the available evidence in this matter, I find that Mrs Melva Jean Staff born 13 July 1926 is deceased and that her death occurred on or about 19 July 1981. The cause of death, the location of death, and the circumstances of the death are unable to be ascertained.

Signature:



Kim M. W. Parkinson
Coroner



28th July, 2011