

IN THE CORONERS COURT  
OF VICTORIA  
AT MELBOURNE

Court Reference: 1022/06

**FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST**

*Form 37 Rule 60(1)  
Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008*

**Inquest into the Death of UNKNOWN REMAINS**

Delivered On: 16 March 2012

Delivered At: Coroner's Court of Victoria  
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street  
Melbourne Victoria

Hearing Dates: 16 March 2012

Findings of: K. M. W. PARKINSON, CORONER

Police Coronial  
Support Unit PCSU: Senior Constable Kelly Ramsey

I, K. M. W. PARKINSON, Coroner having investigated the death of UNKNOWN REMAINS

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 16 March 2012  
at Melbourne

find that the identity of the deceased was UNKNOWN REMAINS

and the death likely occurred between February 1999 and sometime during the year 2000

at an Unknown Location

from:

1a. UNKNOWN CAUSE

**in the following circumstances:**

1. This is an inquest in relation to unidentified remains of a male person located at Ferny Creek in the Dandenong Ranges National Park on 18 March 2006.
2. On Saturday 18 March 2006, Mr Anthony Nimbs, a ranger with Parks Victoria was surveying an old road alignment in thick terrain for the purposes of a fuel reduction burn. He was approximately 400 metres inland from the intersection of Mount Erin Road and Janesdall Avenue, Ferny Creek, when he observed a rope hanging from a tree branch. Upon inspection he observed a human skull on the forest floor. Police attended and observed both the skull and the noosed rope hanging from a tree branch with black duct tape around it. Also located in the vicinity of the skull were a pair of handcuffs and a bottle of packaged water. Police formed the view that the duct tape was utilised to assist in the strength or making of the noose.
3. A wildfire had been recorded in the area in 1997 according to investigators. There was suggestion in the materials that the rope had been burnt at some point as had the tree in which the noose was located. The timing of the 1997 fire and the dates of manufacture of the water bottle and the dates of manufacture of the clothing remnants found on and with the skeleton, appear to conflict with that time frame being relevant to the death.
4. Investigating police suggest that the deceased may have taken his own life by hanging and that the involvement of artefact such as handcuffs and duct tape was associated with an attempt by the deceased to prevent himself from abandoning the suicide attempt. Attempts to obtain fingerprints from the handcuffs were unsuccessful.
5. Examination by a Forensic Anthropologist reported that the remains comprised a fully skeletonised adult Caucasian male, aged between 23 and 27 years, approximately 167cm to 180cm in height. A Forensic Odontologist provided an estimated age of 25 years.

6. No abnormal skeletal pathology was identified by the anthropologist, nor was any trauma identified on the skeleton, however there was no soft tissue remaining for examination. The remains were examined by an entomologist, who reported that the insects involved in the remains in the early stages of decay, that is shortly after death, were only active between November and March.
7. No evidence was located to enable identification of the deceased. Extensive DNA comparison sample analysis has been unsuccessful in establishing any possible identification. Investigations by Victoria Police Missing Persons Unit and by the Bellier Task Force have been unable to identify any person who may fit the criteria of the skeletal remains.
8. Having considered all of the available evidence, I am unable to conclude as to the manner and circumstances, or cause of death in relation to the unidentified remains. Whilst there is some evidence, which suggests that the individual has taken his own life, in the absence of any identification or personal history and absence of a full post mortem examination by a Forensic Pathologist, I am unable to conclude positively that the death was as a result of suicide.
9. Further, having regard to the artefacts found with the remains, it is not possible to exclude the involvement of another person or persons in the death.
10. Nor is it possible for me to conclude as to the manner of death, despite the existence of the noose and rope at the location.
11. I find that the remains are human remains of an unknown male person.
12. I further find that whilst the death likely occurred between February 1999 and 2000, the cause and location of death are unable to be determined at this time.

Signature:



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K. M. W. PARKINSON  
CORONER

16 March 2012

