IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

COR 2026 003446

FINDING INTO DEATH WITHOUT INQUEST

Form 38 Rule 63(2)

*Section 67 of the **Coroners Act 2008***

1. I, Coroner Sarah Gebert, having investigated the death of Pauline Margaret Vanos and without holding an inquest, make the following findings pursuant to section 67(1) of the *Coroners Act 2008* (**the Act**):

   a) the identity of the deceased was Pauline Margaret Vanos, born 7 June 1966;

   b) the death occurred on 19 June 2026 at [redacted], Mount Duneed, Victoria from aspiration pneumonia complicating end stage Huntington's disease; and

   c) the death occurred in the circumstances described below.

2. Pauline was 60 years old at the time of her death and resided in Mount Duneed.

3. Immediately before her death, Pauline lived in a Specialist Disability Accommodation (**SDA**) dwelling enrolled under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (**NDIS**). Deaths which occur in these circumstances fall within the definition of a reportable death in the Act, which includes the death of a person *in care or custody*, even if it appears to have been from natural causes.

4. Pauline had significant physical and functional support needs. She received daily living supports provided by disability service provider Care Plus Professionals.

5. As part of my investigation, the Court obtained evidence including medical records from relevant health services and a statement from Care Plus Professionals about the support provided to Pauline. All the material will remain on the coronial file and comprises my

investigation into Pauline's death. In writing this finding, I do not purport to summarise all the material and evidence but will only refer to it in such detail as is warranted in the circumstances of this case.

6. Pauline was diagnosed with Huntington's disease in 1993. She had an advanced care plan to support her wishes to avoid medical investigations, hospitalisations, or life-prolonging measures, and to maintain her comfort and dignity with all end-of-life care to be provided in her home. Pauline's daughter Danelle was her medical treatment decision maker.

7. Danelle reported she was satisfied with the support Care Plus Professionals provided. She described Pauline as "finally happy in her own home with staff who actually cared for her". She said in her mother's final days, her support workers "pampered her… with love, attention and affection."

Circumstances of death

8. On 4 May 2026, Pauline was admitted to the Barwon Health Palliative Care service in the setting of her end-stage Huntington's disease. In accordance with her wishes, this service provided enhanced palliative care nursing support in the home.

9. By 18 June 2026, Pauline's clinical condition had deteriorated. She was reviewed by a palliative care clinician, who considered she was in the terminal phase of her disease, with no response to verbal stimuli or touch. She was noted to have significant respiratory secretions, with marked respiratory effort with tachypnoea and accessory muscle use, in keeping with an aspiration event.

10. At about 4.00am on 19 June 2026, Pauline passed away at home in her sleep, in the presence of a beloved support worker.

Medical cause of death

11. Forensic Pathologist, Dr Brian Beer, from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (**VIFM**), conducted an external examination on 22 June 2026 and provided a written report of his findings dated 24 June 2026.

12. The post-mortem examination was consistent with reported circumstances.

13. Dr Beer provided an opinion that the medical cause of death was *"1(a) aspiration pneumonia complicating end stage Huntington's disease"* and was due to natural causes.

14. I accept Dr Beer's opinion.

I convey my sincere condolences to Pauline's family and friends for their loss.

Pursuant to section 73(1B) of the Act, I order that this finding be published (in redacted form) on the Coroners Court of Victoria website in accordance with the rules.

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

Gary Vanos, senior next of kin

Danelle Vanos

Senior Constable Katey Zivkovic, Victoria Police, Coroner's Investigator

Signature:





Coroner Sarah Gebert

Date: 17 November 2026

NOTE: Under section 83 of the ***Coroners Act 2008*** ('the Act'), a person with sufficient interest in an investigation may appeal to the Trial Division of the Supreme Court against the findings of a coroner in respect of a death after an investigation. An appeal must be made within 6 months after the day on which the determination is made, unless the Supreme Court grants leave to appeal out of time under section 86 of the Act.