



IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

Court Reference: COR 2019 2322

FINDING INTO DEATH WITHOUT INQUEST

Form 38 Rule 63(2)

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Findings of:	AUDREY JAMIESON, Coroner
Deceased:	Ragupathy Perumal
Date of birth:	27/08/1960
Date of death:	On or about 7/8 May 2019
Cause of death:	1(a) Mixed drug toxicity
Place of death:	Room 6, Melaleuca Lodge, 10 Brunt Road, Beaconsfield, 3807

INTRODUCTION

1. On 8 May 2019, Ragupathy Perumal was 58 years old when he was found deceased in a motel. His body was found after he was reported missing to police and was eventually found after the signals from his mobile phone were traced.
2. In the motel room was evidence of the preparation for a desired outcome. This preparation included a mortar and pestle, rodent poison in the form of bait blocks and liquid tree killer. Also, a large amount of Panamax and Panadol branded paracetamol as well as at least one other generic brand of paracetamol.
3. A Chemist Warehouse receipt evidenced the fact that the large quantity of paracetamol was recently purchased.
4. Empty bottles which previously contained alcoholic beverages were also found in the motel room, apparently consumed by the deceased.
5. At the time of his death, Mr Perumal lived at 1 Gibb Court, Pakenham, 3810 with his partner, Helene Maree Murray.
6. Ms Murray reported that Mr Perumal was a non-drinker and an ex-smoker and had been receiving treatment for depression for several years. He was also receiving treatment for Angina Pectoris.
7. In the recent past Mr Perumal had been convicted by a court in New South Wales and was to appear for his sentencing on 13 May 2019. This was a source of much angst to Mr Perumal.
8. Mr Perumal also attended regular counselling sessions with a psychologist.
9. In the weeks leading to his demise, Mr Perumal repeatedly mentioned his thoughts on death and dying to Ms Murray.
10. In the days leading to his death, Mr Perumal purchased a funeral policy and transferred a substantial amount of money into the banking account of Ms Murray. He also advanced a cash amount, left at their home. A “suicide note” was also found at their home.

THE CORONIAL INVESTIGATION

11. Mr Perumal's death was reported to the Coroner as it fell within the definition of a reportable death in the *Coroners Act 2008* (the Act). Reportable deaths include deaths that are unexpected, unnatural, violent or result from accident or injury.
12. The role of a coroner is to independently investigate reportable deaths to establish, if possible, identity, medical cause of death, and surrounding circumstances. Surrounding circumstances are limited to events which are sufficiently proximate and causally related to the death. The purpose of a coronial investigation is to establish the facts, not to cast blame or determine criminal or civil liability.
13. Under the Act, coroners also have the important functions of helping to prevent deaths and promoting public health and safety and the administration of justice through the making of comments or recommendations in appropriate cases about any matter connected to the death under investigation.
14. The Victoria Police assigned an officer to be the Coroner's Investigator for the investigation of Mr Perumal's death. The Coroner's Investigator conducted inquiries on my behalf, including taking statements from witnesses – such as family, the forensic pathologist, treating clinicians and investigating officers – and submitted a coronial brief of evidence.
15. This finding draws on the totality of the coronial investigation into the death of Ragupathy Perumal, including evidence contained in the coronial brief. Whilst I have reviewed all the material, I will only refer to that which is directly relevant to my findings or necessary for narrative clarity. In the coronial jurisdiction, facts must be established on the balance of probabilities.¹

¹ Subject to the principles enunciated in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw* (1938) 60 CLR 336. The effect of this and similar authorities is that coroners should not make adverse findings against, or comments about, individuals unless the evidence provides a comfortable level of satisfaction as to those matters taking into account the consequences of such findings or comments.

MATTERS IN RELATION TO WHICH A FINDING MUST BE MADE²

Identity of the deceased

16. On 10 May 2019, the body of Ragupathy Perumal, born 27 August 1960, was visually identified by his partner, Helene Maree Murray.
17. Identity is not in dispute and requires no further investigation.

Medical cause of death

18. Forensic Pathologist Dr Melanie Archer from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (**VIFM**), conducted a partial autopsy on 10 May 2019 and in addition, reviewed the following sources:
 - i. The post-mortem computed tomography (CT) scan,
 - ii. The Victoria Police Report of Death, Form 83,
 - iii. The **VIFM** contact log and
 - iv. The Medical records from Eastcare Medical Centre.
19. Dr Archer provided a written report of her findings dated 8 November 2019.
20. The post-mortem examination revealed the body of an adult man free from physical injury. Consistent with the history given or the information received, the body is accompanied by the following exhibits taken from the scene:
 - i. Approx. 10mL of thick reddish coloured liquid in a yellow top specimen container,
 - ii. 2 x Yates Tree & Blackberry Killer containers. (one with cap containing 250mL liquid),
 - iii. 1 x Box Ultra Power Fast Action Bait Blocks and 5 x solid red blocks.

² If possible.

21. Toxicological analysis of these exhibits identified the presence of the following substances:
- i. Diethylene glycol monoethyl ether;³
 - ii. Paracetamol;⁴
 - iii. Codeine;⁵
 - iv. Citalopram;⁶
 - v. Mirtazapine.⁷
22. Toxicological analysis of the post-mortem samples identified the presence of the following substances:
- i. Diethylene glycol monoethyl ether;⁸
 - ii. Ethanol;⁹
 - iii. Paracetamol;¹⁰
 - iv. Codeine;¹¹

³ An alcohol commonly used in the production of soaps and dyes.

⁴ An analgaesic drug freely available and sold under many brand names.

⁵ An opioid analgaesic derived from the opium poppy plant.

⁶ A drug indicated for the treatment of major depression and panic disorders.

⁷ A drug indicated for the treatment of depression.

⁸ Detected in both the blood and stomach contents of Mr Perumal.

⁹ Detected in the blood of Mr Perumal, concentrated at 0.11g/100mL.

¹⁰ Detected in the blood of Mr Perumal, concentrated at ~232mg/L. An amount weighing ~4162mg was also detected in his stomach contents.

¹¹ Detected in the blood of Mr Perumal, concentrated at ~0.5mg/L. An amount weighing ~50mg was also detected in his stomach contents.

- v. Morphine;¹²
- vi. Temazepam;¹³
- vii. Citalopram;¹⁴
- viii. Mirtazapine.¹⁵

23. Dr Archer provided an opinion that the medical cause of death was '1(a) Mixed drug toxicity'.

FINDINGS

24. Pursuant to section 67(1) of the *Coroners Act 2008* I make the following findings:
- (a) the identity of the deceased was Ragupathy Perumal born 27 August 1960;
 - (b) the death occurred on or about 7 or 8 May 2019 at Melaleuca Lodge, 10 Brunt Road, Beaconsfield, 3807;
 - (c) I accept and adopt the medical cause of death ascribed by Dr Melanie Archer and I find that Ragupathy Perumal died from 1(a)Mixed drug toxicity.
25. Having considered all the circumstances, I find that Ragupathy Perumal intentionally took his own life.

¹² An opiate drug with strong analgaesic qualities. Detected in the blood of Mr Perumal, concentrated at ~0.02mg/L

¹³ A sedative or hypnotic drug indicated for the treatment of insomnia. Detected in the blood of Mr Perumal, concentrated at ~0.07mg/L.

¹⁴ Detected in the blood of Mr Perumal, concentrated at ~0,02mg/L. An amount weighing 45mg was also detected in his stomach contents.

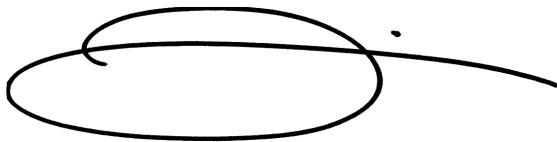
¹⁵ Detected in the blood of Mr Perumal, concentrated at ~0.3 mg/L. An amount weighing ~142mg was also detected his stomach contents.

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

Helene Maree Murray, Senior Next of Kin

Constable Daniel Beresford, Coroner's Investigator

Signature:



Audrey Jamieson

CORONER

Date: 13 May 2021

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.
