

IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT WANGARATTA

Court Reference: 2105 / 2011

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Form 37 Rule 60(1)

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Inquest into the Death of: Andrew POLLOCK

Delivered On: 22 October 2012

Delivered At: Coroners Court of Victoria
Faithfull Street, Wangaratta

Hearing Dates: 22 October 2012

Findings of: Coroner Susan Armour

Police Coronial Support Unit Senior Constable Sarah Williamson, Victoria Police

I, SUSAN JANE ARMOUR, Coroner having investigated the death of ANDREW JOHN POLLOCK

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 22 October 2012

at Wangaratta

find that the identity of the deceased was ANDREW JOHN POLLOCK

born on 22 August 1955

and the death occurred on 6 June 2011

at Albury Base Hospital, New South Wales

from:

1 (a) PNEUMONIA

1 (b) BONE MARROW FAILURE

1 (c) METASTATIC CARCINOMA – UNKNOWN ORIGIN

in the following circumstances¹:

1. Mr Andrew Pollock was a 55 year old man who at the time of his death resided at 3 Dundee Drive, Wodonga (“Dundee Drive”), a purpose built facility run by the Department of Human Services, which provides 24 hour care for its residents. Mr Pollock was born with Downs Syndrome and had been cared for at home until the age of 17 when he was admitted to the Mayday Hills facility in Beechworth in Victoria. Mr Pollock lived there for approximately 20 years before moving into communal housing in Wodonga.

2. Mr Pollock was a person in care as defined by section 3(d) of the *Coroners Act* 2008 (“the Act”). Accordingly, his death was reportable pursuant to section 5(c) of that Act and section 52(2)(b) of the Act provides that an inquest into his death is mandatory. This inquest has proceeded by way of summary as to the circumstances of his death.

¹ The circumstances of Mr Pollock’s death were the subject of an investigation by Senior Constable Leon Perry (24118) who prepared an inquest brief for the Coroner and which was tendered in evidence at the inquest. I have drawn from this investigation in making my factual findings together with other documents tendered in evidence.

3. Mr Pollock was described by staff of the Department of Human Services as a happy and fun loving client who had a unique sense of humour and was extremely popular with staff. He had competed in the Special Olympics while living at Dundee Drive and competed for many years in running, swimming, bowls and other events. He attended a Church group at Guadalupe House in Albury and was a regular attendee at the Murray Valley Centre. Mr Pollock was an early riser and he would get up, get dressed and make his own bed and breakfast each morning. He was described as being particularly high functioning for his disability and would immediately inform staff if he was feeling unwell or required anything out of the ordinary. Staff noted that Mr Pollock was visited by his family and had regular phone calls from them which he enjoyed very much and which had made him feel special.

4. Mr Pollock was seen by Dr Ahmed Taher at the Federation Clinic on 13 May, 23 May and 26 May 2011. On 13 May 2011 he complained of pain on the right lower lumbar region, stating that he had fallen from his bed although this had not been witnessed. He was prescribed pain relief and it was agreed with his carer that he would be reviewed in several days if symptoms persisted. On 23 May 2011 Mr Pollock was seen by a doctor at the Federation Clinic for a lower respiratory tract infection. He was alert, had no respiratory distress and was prescribed antibiotics for the infection. He was to be reviewed in 2-3 days if he did not improve and was to attend the emergency department if he deteriorated.

5. On the morning of 26 May 2011 Mr Pollock spoke to Michael Cooper, the Manager at Dundee Drive, and told him he had a sore chest. He was asked if he would prefer to remain at home rather than attend the Murray Valley Centre in Wodonga but he indicated he wanted to go and left on the bus as usual. Later that morning Mr Cooper was contacted by the Murray Valley Centre and informed Mr Pollock was unwell. Mr Cooper then contacted the Federation Clinic and made an appointment for Mr Pollock before picking him up from the Centre.

6. Mr Pollock was seen by Dr Taher at the Federation Clinic that day at which time he complained of ongoing abdominal pain over the previous three days that had become worse that morning. Mr Pollock was referred to the Emergency Department at the Wodonga campus of Albury Wodonga Health where he was admitted and he remained there until 29 May 2011 when he was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit of the Albury campus in New South Wales. He had

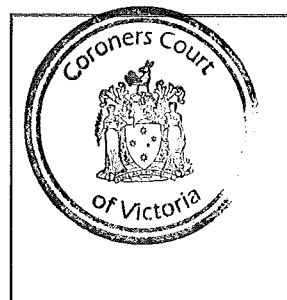
developed respiratory failure from pneumonia but his lack of response and deterioration was attributed to pancytopenia, a deficiency of cellular elements of the blood, and a bone marrow biopsy revealed adenocarcinoma from an unknown primary site. Family were with him during his stay at the Albury campus and findings of advanced metastatic cancer complicated by bone marrow failure were communicated to them on 3 June 2011. After consultation with family, it was decided that Mr Pollock should be made comfortable and that in the event of a cardiac arrest he was not to receive CPR. He was transferred to a critical care bed on 5 June 2011 and treatment was directed towards sedation and comfort until his death at 1705 hours on 6 June 2011.

7. A Coroner, on advice from Dr Michael P Burke, Senior Pathologist with the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, and having noted the Senior Next of Kin did not want an autopsy, directed that no autopsy was required. Dr Burke performed an external examination of Mr Pollock at the mortuary, reviewed the circumstances of his death and provided a written report of his findings. Dr Burke reported that in all of the circumstances a reasonable cause of death appeared to be Pneumonia, Bone Marrow Failure and Metastatic Carcinoma – Unknown Origin.

8. I find that Mr Andrew Pollock died on 6 June 2011 of pneumonia, bone marrow failure and metastatic carcinoma of unknown origin.

Signature:


SUSAN JANE ARMOUR
CORONER



Date: 22 October 2012