

FORM 37

Rule 60(1)

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Court reference: 2679/10

Inquest into the Death of **CHERIE DEANNE ALDERSON**

Delivered On: 21st July 2011

Delivered At: Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street
Melbourne Victoria

Hearing Dates: 21st July 2011

Findings of: JUDGE JENNIFER COATE

Place of death: Caritas Christi Hospice

Police Coronial Support
Unit (PCSU): Leading Senior Constable King Taylor

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In the Coroners Court of Victoria at Melbourne

I, JUDGE JENNIFER COATE, State Coroner

having investigated the death of:

Details of deceased:

Surname: ALDERSON
First name: CHERIE
Address: 7 Amery Avenue, Blackburn, Victoria 3130

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 21st July 2011
at Melbourne

find that the identity of the deceased was CHERIE DEANNE ALDERSON
and death occurred on 12th July, 2010

at Caritas Christi Hospice, 104 Studley Park Road, Kew, Victoria 3101

from

1a. METASTATIC BREAST CANCER¹

in the following circumstances:²

1. Cherie Alderson ("Cherie") was born in Mitcham on the 20th of April 1968. At the time of her death, she was 42 years old.
2. She was the youngest of four children to her mother and father. Her mother, Mrs Glen Ochre, remarried and had two further children to her second marriage.
3. Whilst in utero, Cherie's mother underwent an operation for the removal of her gall bladder. At the time of this operation Cherie's mother was unaware that she was pregnant. It was later established that Cherie's mother was 12 weeks pregnant with Cherie at the time of this operation.

¹ Report of Dr Paul Bedford, forensic pathologist contained in the Brief of Evidence

² The Brief of Evidence was tendered and marked as Exhibit 1

4. At the time of Cherie's birth she required resuscitation twice.
5. At 10 months of age, Cherie was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. This condition prevented her from being able to sit up or walk without assistance.
6. At 18 months of age Cherie's elder sister, aged two and half, passed away as a result of cancer.
7. By the time Cherie was seven years of age, her mother had experienced the loss of a child, the loss of her marriage and her own physical health problems. In these circumstances, Mrs Ochre had to make the heartbreaking decision to place Cherie into permanent DHS care. Cherie remained in that care for the rest of her life.
8. For the last 15 years of Cherie's life, she lived in a five bed Department of Human Services house at 7 Amery Avenue, Blackburn.
9. In January 2008, Cherie was diagnosed with a lump in her left breast which was identified as cancerous.
10. In April 2008, Cherie underwent a mastectomy to remove her left breast. During this operation Cherie's lymph nodes were also found to be cancerous and were therefore removed.
11. Approximately 1 month later Cherie underwent a CT scan where it was established that the cancer had spread to her bones. In April 2008, Cherie had radiotherapy for thoracic spine metastases.
12. However, approximately 3 months later, after a VCAT hearing with Cherie participating, Cherie underwent a further operation to remove her ovaries to attempt to slow the advance of her cancer. After this operation, it appeared that Cherie's deterioration had been slowed. She was able to be taken on a holiday, with her sister, by her mother in November 2008.
13. In February 2009, Cherie began to develop increasing pain in her right hip. This was treated by way of radiation.
14. In January 2010, new metastases were diagnosed which were also treated with radiotherapy. By April 2010, Cherie started to develop more pain. She was able to remain at home in her DHS care in Blackburn with lots of extra care from staff and her family, who were attending daily and often twice daily to assist in Cherie's care.

15. On the 21st of June 2010, Cherie was admitted to Caritas Christi Hospice to stabilise her medication in order to get her pain under control. At this time, her life expectancy was reduced from six months to three months.

16. During her time at Caritas Christi, Cherie required full assistance with all activities including feeding, medication administration, hygiene, toileting, mobility and transfers. It was Cherie's mother's observation that Cherie appeared a lot more comfortable in this environment.

17. Sadly, during the next few weeks, somewhat more rapidly than had been anticipated, Cherie's condition deteriorated leaving her with increased drowsiness and an elevated temperature. This was treated and she showed an initial improvement, but her condition gradually worsened to a point where attending to her daily needs became increasingly distressing and painful for her.

18. By the 12th of July 2010, Cherie became extremely drowsy and was unable to take anything orally. She was treated with comfort measures and died peacefully at 5:10p.m. on 12th of July 2010, in the presence of friends and staff members.

19. In a statement provided to the coroner, Cherie's mother described her as someone who, despite her disability, lived her life to the absolute fullest. She was described by her mother as very happy and outgoing, optimistic and adventurous.

20. Her mother also stated that Cherie was very much loved by all and very well cared for at her DHS home in Blackburn.

Signature:



Judge Jennifer Coate
State Coroner



21st July, 2011