

IN THE CORONERS COURT  
OF VICTORIA  
AT MELBOURNE

Court Reference: COR 2011 2422

**FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST**

*Form 37 Rule 60(1)*

*Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008*

**Inquest into the Death of: JUNE PARKER**

Delivered On: 9 July 2013

Delivered At: Coroners Court of Victoria  
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street, Melbourne 3000

Hearing Dates: 6 May 2013

Findings of: HEATHER SPOONER, CORONER

Police Coronial Support Unit Leading Senior Constable Ross Treverton, assisting the coroner

I, HEATHER SPOONER, Coroner having investigated the death of JUNE PARKER

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 6 May 2013

at MELBOURNE

find that the identity of the deceased was JUNE ESTELLE PARKER

born on 10 October 1936

and the death occurred on or about 4 October 1981

at Koonya Beach, Blairgowrie 3942

**from:**

1 (a) PRESUMED DROWNING

**in the following circumstances:**

1. Mrs Parker was aged 44 when she disappeared in 1981. Her body was never recovered. She had been suffering significant distress due to the recent breakdown of her marriage and separation from her husband, Mr Lionel Parker. At the time of her disappearance Mrs Parker was living at the matrimonial home situated at 20 Smythe Street, Mont Albert with her younger son, Miles. Her elder son, Milton, had moved from the home sometime prior.
2. On 23 November 2011 Detective Senior Constable Rippon wrote to the coroner reporting the probable death of Mrs Parker and seeking directions as to the conduct of the investigation and inquest. I requested that the death be further investigated with a full inquest brief being prepared.
3. A Family Law court file was obtained and it revealed that on 16 August 1984 a decree nisi was granted and property orders were made in favour of Mr Parker with service upon Mrs Parker being dispensed with (apparently on the basis of affidavit material setting out the circumstances surrounding her disappearance).
4. The investigating police member together with both Mr Lionel Parker and Miles Summers (formerly known as Miles Parker) were subpoenaed to appear at the inquest and give evidence. The Police assistant provided the inquest with a fulsome opening setting out a brief background and events leading up to the apparent demise of Mrs Parker and based on material comprising the inquest brief, part of which is set out as follows:

*"Your Honour, the purpose of this Inquest is to determine the circumstances surrounding the apparent demise of June Estelle Parker on or about 4 October 1981 in the area of Koonya Beach at Blairgowrie, Victoria. June Parker was born on 10 July 1936 at Carlton, Victoria, the youngest of six children. At the time of her disappearance she resided at 20 Smythe Street in Mont Albert. She was married to Lionel Parker, although he had moved out of the house some three weeks prior to her disappearance. They had two children together, sons Miles and Milton. Miles, then aged 21, was still living at home; Milton had moved out some years prior.*

*June Parker was last seen alive on or about 4 October 1981 at the Mont Albert address by her son, Miles Parker. She was reported by Lionel Parker as a missing person to City West Police on 8 October 1981. On that same date her motor vehicle, a blue Peugeot, registration number JP499, was located in the car park at Koonya Beach, Blairgowrie. A police report at the time indicates that an unidentified local resident notice the vehicle there at least two or three days before the search for June took place. A pair of shoes located on the beach was identified by Lionel as belonging to June.*

*An extensive search conducted on both land and sea failed to find any trace of June Parker. None of her personal possessions or clothing, other than the clothing she wore at the time, was missing from the house in Mont Albert.*

*At the time of her disappearance June Parker was 45 years old, 155 centimetres tall, of slim build with brown, short curly hair and green eyes. The officer in charge of the initial investigation, Detective Sergeant Lloyd Smith, states that his enquiries established that June Parker may have been emotionally distressed over a number of marital and family issues prior to her disappearance. She indicated to her friend, Margorie Gordon, that she intended to go to Koonya Beach when she last saw her in September 1981. The purpose of the visit is not known.*

*In the months prior to her disappearance, June Parker was known to take short trips, sometimes for days at a time, to places where the family had visited. Koonya Beach was one of those places. She had made an application to rent a premises at 9/17 Muir Street, Hawthorn, on or about the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of October 1981, the day before she was last seen.*

*None of the relatives or friends spoken to by the current investigating member, Detective Senior Constable Mark Rippon, have seen or heard of June Parker since she was*

*reported missing in 1981. Various media releases in the years following her disappearance have failed to yield any positive information. If alive today, June Parker would be 77 years old. In 1984, Lionel Parker..... was granted a divorce...*

*Miles Parker has supplied a relevant donor DNA sample for comparison to current on-hand unidentified remains without any match being made. Change of name enquiries by deed poll on June Estelle Parker and her maiden name, June Estelle Bracher, conducted with every Australian State and Territory proved nothing to indicate that she changed her name.*

*Taking in all the relevant and available material into account, both from the initial and subsequent investigations, the investigating member has been unable to establish the exact whereabouts of June Parker. He has found nothing to indicate that she may be alive and living elsewhere. There are no eye-witnesses to June Parker either being on the beach or entering the water at Koonya Beach. It is possible that she entered the water on or about 4 October 1981 with the intention of committing suicide....*

5. Mr Lionel Harry Parker told the inquest that he had enjoyed a peaceful marriage to his wife; they were proud of their children and he described the affair that precipitated the marriage breakdown as *'just total stupidity on my part.'*<sup>1</sup> He described Mrs Parker as *'a very straightforward person, an honest, reliable person.....with a 'quiet' personality.'*<sup>2</sup>
6. The last time he saw his wife was outside the home of "Pauline" with whom he had commenced a relationship (and whom he was to later marry<sup>3</sup>). He told the inquest *"her car was parked near mine, and I saw that she was in it and I went and spoke to her".*<sup>4</sup>

*"I think I just said hello to her, and she said – wait a minute, can I just think for a moment – could I say that when we were at Smythe Avenue, or whatever it was, we had a house-warming party and Pauline was there and June's opinion of Pauline was what*

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<sup>1</sup> Transcript, p.6

<sup>2</sup> Transcript, p.10-11

<sup>3</sup> Transcript, p.18

<sup>4</sup> Transcript, p.7

*an unprepossessing person she was; and so she was surprised, I think, that I was seeing her and she said 'What do you see in her?' I think, and I just said 'She's young'".*<sup>5</sup>

7. Given the time that had elapsed since the disappearance, Mr Parker expressed some understandable memory difficulties, describing it as *'cloudy'* at one point. He struggled with recalling the exact sequence and detail and timing of events around when his wife disappeared. He thought he had gone back to the family home after seeing his former wife drive away and that he had left her a note along the lines that he *'loved her'*.<sup>6</sup>
8. He attended City West Police Station to report his wife missing as he didn't know where she was and he wanted to find out.<sup>7</sup> He believed the reference to a *'domestic'* in the *"Missing Person Report"* was the incident in the street.<sup>8</sup> He recalled being taken by police to Koonya Beach at Blairgowrie and seeing a pair of shoes that were *'her shoes located near the water'*.<sup>9</sup> He went on to tell the inquest *'...it looked as though she walked up to where the rocks and the water were, took her shoes off and jumped in'*.<sup>10</sup>
9. Mr Miles Summers told the inquest that he did not spend a lot of time at home around when his mother disappeared; he was young and into partying and experimental drug use, however, he stated *"I was very close to my mother emotionally. We used to talk quite a bit and share things, our feelings on things"*.<sup>11</sup> He described a passionate side to his mother and he told the inquest that *'...as much as she was quiet...she was passionate and she would show her emotions'*.<sup>12</sup> When asked about his parent's relationship he recalled an incident in Sydney when he heard her *'...crying and (he) walked into the bedroom and comforted her'*.<sup>13</sup> He remembered her being upset and giving her comfort after his father had moved out with the girlfriend.<sup>14</sup> He didn't think she suffered mental health issues or was particularly depressed.

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<sup>5</sup> Transcript, p.8

<sup>6</sup> Transcript, p.14

<sup>7</sup> Transcript, p.15

<sup>8</sup> Transcript, p.15

<sup>9</sup> Transcript, p.18

<sup>10</sup> Transcript, p.18

<sup>11</sup> Transcript, p.23

<sup>12</sup> Transcript, p.23

<sup>13</sup> Transcript, p.24

<sup>14</sup> Transcript, p.26

Mr Summers did state however that his mother may have suffered an intellectual inferiority complex within the family and given that she had commenced some courses '*...she started gaining her confidence and that, and I think it really threw her that then, you know, that that wasn't good enough*'.<sup>15</sup> When asked his opinion of what might have occurred he stated '*No, I assume she's dead because I don't know otherwise, but I actually have no opinion at all*'.<sup>16</sup> When specifically asked if he had been aware of any physical altercations between his parents he answered, '*No, I do recall her shouting at him on occasions but I don't recall any physical altercations between them*'.<sup>17</sup>

10. The investigating member initially indicated that there was a Supreme Court file and finding with a presumption of death however he has subsequently advised me that he may have been mistaken and confused with the Family Court file as Supreme Court searches have found no relevant file or finding.
11. There was no evidence to indicate what, if any medical or other treatment Mrs Parker may or may not have sought or received

## **Finding**

Having considered all the available evidence I find that whilst the body of Mrs Parker has never been located, she has presumably drowned and perished after entering the sea at Koonya beach probably with the intention of ending her life.

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<sup>15</sup> Transcript, p.26

<sup>16</sup> Transcript, p.29

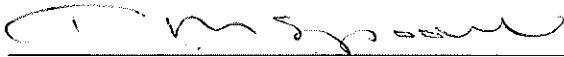
<sup>17</sup> Transcript, p.30

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

The family of Mrs June Parker

Detective Senior Constable Mark Rippon, Boroondara CIU, Investigating Member

Signature:



HEATHER SPOONER

CORONER

Date: 9 July 2013

