

IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

Court Reference: COR 2014 3952

FINDING INTO DEATH WITHOUT INQUEST

Form 38 Rule 60(2)

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

I, CAITLIN ENGLISH, Coroner having investigated the death of PATRICIA O'KEEFE

without holding an inquest:

find that the identity of the deceased was Patricia O'Keefe

born on 17 November 1951

and the death occurred on 4 August 2014

at Werribee Mercy Hospital, Werribee, Victoria

from:

1 (a) PNEUMONIA IN A LADY WITH SPASTIC QUADRIPLEGIA

Pursuant to section 67(1) of the **Coroners Act 2008**, there is a public interest to be served in making findings with respect to **the following circumstances:**

1. Patricia O'Keefe was 62 years old at the time of her death. Ms O'Keefe was born with cerebral palsy, an intellectual disability and spastic quadriplegia. Ms O'Keefe is survived by her brother, John, twin sister, Anastasia, and extended family.
2. At the time of her death, Ms O'Keefe lived in a high care Disability Group Home in Werribee, run by the Department of Health and Human Services. Ms O'Keefe's family reported that Ms O'Keefe's care at this facility was "exceptional".
3. Ms O'Keefe was in the care of the State at the time of her death, therefore her death was reportable under the *Coroners Act 2008*. As Ms O'Keefe's death was due to natural causes, I am not required to hold an inquest (section 52 (3A) *Coroners Act 2008*).
4. Victoria Police conducted an investigation into the circumstances of her death. The Coroner's Investigator prepared a coronial brief, which includes statements obtained from

Ms O'Keefe's sister and carers, Werribee Mercy Hospital staff, Victoria Police investigators and the forensic pathologist who examined Ms O'Keefe. I have drawn on all of this material as to the factual matters in this finding.

Health History

5. Ms O'Keefe had an intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, spastic quadriplegia, sight and hearing loss and kyphoscoliosis. Ms O'Keefe required full support with all areas of daily life and had been in full care facilities since she was 18 months old. Despite her disabilities, Ms O'Keefe was reportedly quite healthy throughout her life, with no reported significant illnesses or diseases.

Events Proximate to Death

6. In mid-July 2014, Ms O'Keefe developed an upper respiratory tract infection and staff closely monitored her and made doctor's appointments for 16, 25 and 31 July, when they considered her condition was worsening. Doctors prescribed antibiotics on each occasion, which were administered by staff at the care facility.
7. On 1 August 2014, Ms O'Keefe appeared more unwell than the previous day. Ms O'Keefe was transported to Werribee Mercy Hospital, where chest x-rays and other routine observations and blood tests were taken. Ms O'Keefe was diagnosed with pneumonia and possible urinary tract infection. Following a clinical review on 2 August 2014, the decision was made to institute end-of-life care measures.
8. Ms O'Keefe died shortly after 2.30am on 4 August 2014, with her twin sister and brother-in-law by her side.

Post Mortem Examination

9. On 5 August 2014, Dr Sarah Parsons, Forensic Pathologist at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, conducted a post mortem inspection of Ms O'Keefe. Dr Parsons completed a report, dated 26 August 2014, in which she formulated the cause of death as 'Pneumonia in a lady with spastic quadriplegia'. A further report, dated 21 May 2015, included an opinion that Ms O'Keefe's death was due to natural causes. I accept Dr Parsons' opinion as to the medical cause of death.

Finding

I find that:

1. The identity of the deceased was Patricia O'Keefe, born 17 November 1951; and

2. Ms O'Keefe died on 4 August 2014 from pneumonia, at the Werribee Mercy Hospital, Werribee, Victoria.

I convey my sincere condolences to Ms O'Keefe's family.

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

Anastasia Hudspith, Senior Next of Kin

Const. Sathar Marikkar, Coroner's Investigator, Victoria Police

Werribee Mercy Hospital

Department of Health and Human Services

Signature:



CAITLIN ENGLISH

CORONER

Date: 15.4.16

