

FORM 37

Rule 60(1)

FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Court reference: 5649/09

Inquest into the Death of ROBERT LEE BRAUN

Delivered On: 22nd August, 2011

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

Hearing Dates: 15th June 2011

Findings of: CORONER JOHN OLLE

Place of death/
Suspected death: Flat 1, 115 Northumberland Road, Pascoe Vale, Victoria 3044

PCSU: Senior Constable Amanda Maybury

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FINDING INTO DEATH WITH INQUEST

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Court reference: 5649/09

In the Coroners Court of Victoria at Melbourne

I, JOHN OLLE, Coroner

having investigated the death of:

Details of deceased:

Surname: BRAUN

First name: ROBERT

Address: 8/13 Balloan Street, Coburg, Victoria 3058

AND having held an inquest in relation to this death on 15th June 2011,
at Melbourne

find that the identity of the deceased was ROBERT LEE BRAUN

and death occurred on 4th December, 2009

at Flat 1 / 115 Northumberland Road, Pascoe Vale, Victoria 3044

from

1a. CARDIOMEGALY AND RECENT INGESTION OF METHADONE

In the following circumstances:

1. Robert Lee Braun was aged 37 years at the time of his death. He lived at 8/12 Balloan Street, Coburg.
2. The coronial brief is comprehensive.
3. At inquest I heard evidence of Roseanne Murphy, Michelle Harvey and Gregory Tickner.
4. All witnesses have provided frank and full evidence, which has greatly assisted my investigation.

A long term user of pain relief medication

5. Robert Braun was a long-term user of pain relief medication. He had apparently suffered injuries earlier in life, which led to his addiction to pain killers.

6. Despite his addiction, he was:

"An invaluable member of staff, trusting and reliable."¹

7. Sister Murphy further explained that he had lost contact with his daughter and ex-partner early on in life and several months prior to his death sought to rekindle contact with his estranged daughter. The attempted reconciliation was unsuccessful.

8. In October 2009, Robert met Michelle Harvey and the pair developed a relationship over ensuing months. Robert's addiction to the pain relief medication continued.

3rd October 2009

9. Robert and Michelle attended a function at St Mary's. Some time previously Robert had sustained a broken hand, which was causing him pain.

10. Having left the St Mary's function, Robert and Michelle attended at the home of Robert's friend, Gregory Tickner.

11. Sufficient for the purposes of this finding, whilst at Mr Tickner's residence, Robert obtained medication which had been prescribed to a third party, who had recently been admitted to palliative care.²

12. I am satisfied that the medication obtained by Robert at Mr Tickner's residence was not subsequently used by him and is not relevant in respect to his cause of death.

Upon returning home

13. During the course of the evening at home with Michelle, Robert's condition deteriorated. He was clearly drug effected and was subsequently located by her deceased. She called emergency services. All attempts to resuscitate Robert, by Michelle initially, and subsequently paramedics, were unsuccessful.

¹ Statement, Sister Roseanne Murphy, Day Centre Manager, St Mary's House of Welcome, Fitzroy.

² The individual died several days later.

14. Robert was well liked. Despite his addiction to pain killing medication, he served a productive and full life. Robert's propensity to acquire pain killing medication led to him using methadone on the evening prior to his death. There is no evidence to ascertain where or by what means Robert obtained the methadone, which contributed, to his death.

Public Health and Safety

15. Robert was not a user of methadone. He thus posed a high risk of death. Methadone is a potentially lethal drug, which should only be used under careful assessment and review of an authorised medically trained methadone prescriber.

Post Mortem Medical Examination

16. On the 8th December 2009, Dr Malcolm Dodd, Forensic Pathologist with the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, performed an autopsy on the body of Robert Lee Braun.

17. Dr Dodd found the cause of death to be cardiomegaly and recent ingestion of methadone.

18. Dr Dodd commented:

"The immediate cause of death in this case would appear to be one of cardiac arrest in a man with cardiac enlargement and toxicological evidence of the recent taking of Methadone.

The summary of circumstances report indicates that the deceased suffered from hypertension.

The cardiac enlargement in this case is consistent with this diagnosis.

Examination of the myocardium showed no evidence of acute ischaemic change or fibrosis.

The coronary arteries are anomalous but all vessels examined were widely patent.

The anomalous coronary arteries are not deemed to be of lethal type.

Toxicological analysis of body fluids disclosed Methadone in blood at a level of approximately 0.3 mg/L.

It is on the advice of the Toxicology Department that the deceased did not hold a valid treatment permit for Methadone at the time of his death.

Methadone is a synthetic narcotic analgesic used in the treatment of opiate dependency and for severe pain.

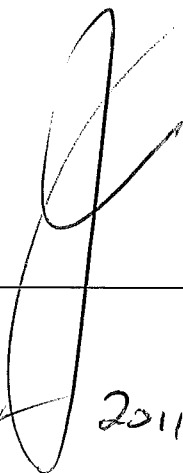
Persons who have taken Methadone with the first week in particular are more likely to develop a toxic response than those on long term maintenance doses.

No other significant naturally occurring disease was disclosed."

Finding

I find the cause of death of Robert Lee Braun to be cardiomegaly and recent ingestion of methadone.

Signature:



John Olle,
Coroner

22 August 2011