

IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

Court Reference: COR 2014 2638

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 Stephen Robert Blom

without holding an inquest:

find that the identity of the deceased was Stephen Robert Blom

born on 18 June 1968

and the death occurred on 22 May 2014

at the Austin Hospital, 145 Studley Road, Heidelberg 3084

from:

1 (a) ACUTE RENAL FAILURE IN THE SETTING OF UROSEPSIS AND SAN
FILIPPO SYNDROME

Pursuant to section 67(2) of the **Coroners Act 2008**, I make findings with respect to **the following circumstances:**

1. Mr Stephen Blom was 45 years of age at the time of his death. He resided in a community residential unit, managed by the Department of Human Services (DHS), at 15 Park Avenue, Kew.
2. At the time of his death, Mr Blom was 'in care' pursuant to s 3 *Coroners Act 2008* (the Act). He had resided in the community residential unit for approximately eight years.
3. A coroner must hold an inquest if the deceased was, immediately before death, a person placed in care, in accordance with section 52(2)(b) of the Act.
4. Pursuant to section 52(3A) of the Act, I am not required to hold an inquest in these circumstances, if I consider that the death was due to 'natural causes'.
5. In accordance with section 53(3B) of the Act, a death may be considered to be due to 'natural causes' if the coroner has received a report from a medical investigator, in

accordance with the rules, that includes an opinion that the death was due to 'natural causes'.

6. I have received a report in this case. I also note that no issues have been identified or concerns raised regarding Mr Blom's health management. Therefore, I make my findings with respect to the circumstances and exercise my discretion not to hold a public hearing through an inquest.
7. A police investigation was conducted into the circumstances of Mr Blom's death. A brief prepared by Victoria Police for the coroner includes statements obtained from Mr Blom's uncle, Mr James Browne, DHS house supervisor, Mr Henry Lim, general practitioner Dr Stephen Bennie and the coroner's investigator.
8. Mr Blom suffered from San Filippo Syndrome¹ and as a result, he was severely intellectually disabled. Mr Browne, Mr Blom's appointed legal guardian, reported Mr Blom had onset of early dementia at age 34. He further reported that the staff at Park Avenue, Kew looked after Mr Blom very well.²
9. On 5 May 2014, Mr Blom was taken to see Dr Bennie as he was confused and unsteady on his feet. Dr Bennie prescribed antibiotics for a urinary tract infection.
10. Dr Bennie next saw Mr Blom on 12 May 2014. Mr Blom was lethargic, constipated, had reduced urinary output and had been vomiting once or twice a day. Dr Bennie changed Mr Blom's antibiotics and ordered an abdominal x-ray to exclude a large bowel obstruction.
11. Mr Blom's abdominal x-ray showed severe constipation. On 13 May 2014, Dr Bennie prescribed medication for rehydration and suppositories for constipation. Dr Bennie reported that Mr Blom's listlessness may have been related to his constipation.³
12. On 14 May 2014, Mr Blom again saw Dr Bennie, who thought Mr Blom was improving, although he was still listless. Mr Blom's abdomen was lax and not tender. Dr Bennie ordered further suppositories to be administered.
13. On 15 May 2014, Dr Bennie noted Mr Blom was lethargic, was not walking and not eating. He made the decision to transfer Mr Blom to the Austin Hospital for further investigation.⁴

¹ A rare neurodegenerative disorder.

² Coronial Brief, page 2.

³ Coronial Brief, page 6.

⁴ Ibid.

14. On admission, Mr Blom was diagnosed with a pre-renal acute kidney injury. The decision was made to trial intravenous therapy, antibiotics and diuresis. This was unsuccessful.
15. A meeting was held between Mr Blom's family and medical staff. A decision was made for Mr Blom to be palliated and to be made as comfortable as possible.
16. Mr Blom passed away peacefully on 22 May 2014 at 9.30pm.

Post Mortem Examination

17. A post mortem inspection and report was completed by Forensic Pathologist Dr Matthew Lynch at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine on 26 May 2014. Dr Lynch formulated the cause of death. I accept his opinion. Dr Lynch noted;

"on the basis of all the information available to me at this time, I am of the opinion that this death was due to natural causes."

Finding

I find that Stephen Blom died from acute renal failure in the setting of urosepsis and San Filippo syndrome.

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

Mr James Browne
Constable Steven Gegson, Victoria Police

Pursuant to section 73(1B) of the **Coroners Act 2008**, I direct that a copy of this finding be published on the internet.

Signature:



CAITLIN ENGLISH
CORONER
Date: 22 June 2015

