



IN THE CORONERS COURT
OF VICTORIA
AT MELBOURNE

COR 2024 003471

FINDING INTO DEATH WITHOUT INQUEST

Form 38 Rule 63(2)

Section 67 of the Coroners Act 2008

Findings of:	Coroner Leveasque Peterson
Deceased:	Sharanjeev Singh Johal
Date of birth:	31 May 1976
Date of death:	21 June 2024
Cause of death:	1(a) PNEUMONIA (KLEBSIELLA AND COVID-19) COMPLICATING MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE
Place of death:	Unit 2/335 Clarendon Street Thornbury Victoria 3071
Keywords:	In care, natural causes

INTRODUCTION

1. On 21 June 2024, Sharanjeev Singh Johal (**Terry**), was 48 years old when he died at his supported accommodation service, run by Yooralla. Terry's death was caused by complications arising from motor neurone disease.
2. Terry loved to travel, and he enjoyed camping and fishing. He was an intelligent and accomplished man loved by his family and friends. Terry had an older sister and a younger brother. His father passed away in 1985.

THE CORONIAL INVESTIGATION

3. Terry's death was reported to the Coroner as it fell within the definition of a reportable death in the *Coroners Act 2008* (the Act). Terry was in full time care at the time of his death which meant his death constituted a mandatory reportable death even though his death was a result of natural causes.
4. The role of a coroner is to independently investigate reportable deaths to establish, if possible, identity, medical cause of death, and surrounding circumstances. Surrounding circumstances are limited to events which are sufficiently proximate and causally related to the death. The purpose of a coronial investigation is to establish the facts, not to cast blame or determine criminal or civil liability.
5. Under the Act, coroners also have the important functions of helping to prevent deaths and promoting public health and safety and the administration of justice through the making of comments or recommendations in appropriate cases about any matter connected to the death under investigation.
6. Victoria Police assigned an officer to be the Coroner's Investigator for the investigation of Terry's death. The Coroner's Investigator conducted inquiries on my behalf, including taking statements from witnesses – such as Terry's mother, and the forensic pathologist, – and submitted this evidence to me.
7. This finding draws on the totality of the coronial investigation into the death of Sharanjeev Singh Johal known and referred to as Terry in this finding. Whilst I have reviewed all the available material, I will only refer to that which is directly relevant to my findings or

necessary for narrative clarity. In the coronial jurisdiction, facts must be established on the balance of probabilities.¹

MATTERS IN RELATION TO WHICH A FINDING MUST, IF POSSIBLE, BE MADE

Circumstances in which the death occurred

8. Terry was born in Singapore in 1971. Terry and his family lived in Singapore until he finished national service, after which he decided to move to Melbourne to study. Terry obtained his undergraduate and masters degrees from RMIT. He was subsequently offered a lecturing position at RMIT where he remained employed until he encountered serious health issues.
9. In early 2016 Terry began to experience difficulties walking. His mobility issues persisted and in 2017 Terry went in for a check-up. In February 2017 Terry received a devastating diagnosis of motor neurone disease. Terry was understandably upset with his prognosis; however, he continued to lecture and live by himself in Thornbury, assisted and supported by his mother, Kuldip.
10. By 2020 Terry had transitioned from respite care and support to full time care with Yooralla.
11. In the week before he passed away Terry contracted Covid-19. Although Terry continued to send positive messages to his mother, his condition began to decline, and staff advised Kuldip that family should attend and see Terry as his condition was not improving.
12. On 21 June 2024 Terry passed away in circumstances that were not considered suspicious.

Identity of the deceased

13. On 21 June 2024, Sharanjeev Singh Johal otherwise known as Terry, born 31 May 1976, was identified by his long-term friend Nathan Bingham.
14. Identity is not in dispute and requires no further investigation.

¹ Subject to the principles enunciated in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw* (1938) 60 CLR 336. The effect of this and similar authorities is that coroners should not make adverse findings against, or comments about, individuals unless the evidence provides a comfortable level of satisfaction as to those matters taking into account the consequences of such findings or comments.

Medical cause of death

15. Forensic Pathologist Dr Matthew Lynch from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) conducted an examination of Terry on 24 June 2024 and provided a written report of his findings dated 12 September 2024.
16. Dr Lynch provided an opinion that the medical cause of death was 1 (a) PNEUMONIA (KLEBSIELLA AND COVID-19) COMPLICATING MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE.
17. I accept Dr Lynch's opinion as to cause of death.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

18. Pursuant to section 67(1) of the *Coroners Act 2008* I make the following findings:
 - a) the identity of the deceased was Sharanjeev Singh Johal, born 31 May 1976;
 - b) the death occurred on 21 June 2024 at Unit 2/335 Clarendon Street Thornbury Victoria 3071, from PNEUMONIA (KLEBSIELLA AND COVID-19) COMPLICATING MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE; and
 - c) the death occurred in the circumstances described above.

I would like to thank Kuldip for providing a statement about Terry's life and the circumstances of his death. I convey my sincere condolences to family for their loss.

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

Kuldip Kaur Johal, Senior Next of Kin

Senior Constable Matthew Waterson, Coroner's Investigator

Signature:



CORONER LEVEASQUE PETERSON

DATE : 01 NOVEMBER 2024



NOTE: Under section 83 of the *Coroners Act 2008* ('the Act'), a person with sufficient interest in an investigation may appeal to the Trial Division of the Supreme Court against the findings of a coroner in respect of a death after an investigation. An appeal must be made within 6 months after the day on which the determination is made, unless the Supreme Court grants leave to appeal out of time under section 86 of the Act.
