



FINDING OF INQUEST

An Inquest taken on behalf of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at Adelaide in the State of South Australia, on the 18th day of July 2014 and the 28th day of November 2014, by the Coroner's Court of the said State, constituted of Mark Frederick Johns, State Coroner, into the death of Agnes Gillon Russell.

The said Court finds that Agnes Gillon Russell aged 75 years, late of Ridgehaven Lodge, Hazel Grove, Ridgehaven, South Australia died at Ridgehaven, South Australia on the 19th day of January 2012 as a result of intracranial haemorrhage. The said Court finds that the circumstances of her death were as follows:

1. Introduction, reason for Inquest and background

- 1.1. Agnes Gillon Russell died on 19 January 2012 in Ridgehaven Lodge, a Masonic Homes aged care facility. She was 75 years old. At the time of her death she was subject to a Guardianship Board order requiring her to be detained at the facility and, according, her death was a death in custody within the meaning of the Coroners Act 2003 and this Inquest was held as required by section 231(1)(a) of that Act.
- 1.2. Ms Russell had a medical history of cerebrovascular accident, frontal lobe dementia, delirium depression, hypertension, cirrhosis, implanted pacemaker, pelvic fracture, anxiety and osteoarthritis.
- 1.3. On 17 November 2011 the Public Advocate was granted full guardianship of Ms Russell under the Guardianship and Administration Act 1993 including section 32 powers allowing the Public Advocate to direct where Ms Russell should be detained. On 14 January 2012 Ms Russell was noted by staff to have fallen from her dining chair. She was transported by ambulance to the Royal Adelaide Hospital where a CT

scan was carried out revealing a large left frontal intracerebral haemorrhage. Ms Russell was reviewed by the neurosurgical registrar who confirmed that she was not fit for surgical management. The next day a review by the on-call physician noted Ms Russell to be unresponsive. It was considered that her intracerebral haemorrhage was catastrophic and her prognosis limited.

- 1.4. On 16 January 2012 a palliative care review was carried out and it was decided that Ms Russell should be transferred back to the nursing home for end stage care. On 17 January 2012 Ms Russell was discharged back to the nursing home with medications for comfort care. At 4:45pm on 19 January 2012 a care worker at the nursing home checked on Ms Russell and noted that she was breathing loudly. The care worker re-entered her room at about 4:51pm and found that she had ceased breathing and had died.

2. Cause of death

- 2.1. A pathology review was carried out by Dr Iain McIntryre of Forensic Science South Australia who gave the cause of death as intracranial haemorrhage¹, and I so find.

3. Conclusion and recommendation

- 3.1. Having reviewed the material in this case it is my opinion that the grant of a Guardianship Order under section 32 of the Guardianship and Administration Act 1993 was entirely appropriate, as was Ms Russell's detention by reason of her frontal lobe dementia.
- 3.2. I have no doubt that her care at the nursing home and at the Royal Adelaide Hospital was entirely appropriate also. I have no recommendations to make in this case.

Key Words: Death in Custody

In witness whereof the said Coroner has hereunto set and subscribed his hand and

Seal the 28th day of November, 2014.

State Coroner

¹ Exhibit C2a