



MAGISTRATES COURT *of* TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION



Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Duncan Fairley, Coroner, having investigated the death of Yolande Maria Scheffer

Find that:

- a) The identity of the deceased is Yolande Maria Scheffer;
- b) Ms Scheffer died in the circumstances described in this finding;
- c) Ms Scheffer died as a result of drowning;
- d) Ms Scheffer died on 7 January 2016 in the waters off Somerset Beach, Tasmania;
- e) Ms Scheffer was born in Burnie on 28 February 1966 and was aged 49 years at the time of her death;
- f) Ms Scheffer was divorced and was self-employed as a naturopath and beauty therapist; and
- g) No person contributed to the cause of Ms Scheffer's death.

Background:

Yolande Maria Scheffer was born in Burnie, Tasmania on 28 February 1966. She was the eldest of 2 children born to Margie Joanna Love. Her mother met Garry Wayne Love, whom she would later marry, when Ms Scheffer was 18 months of age.

As a child Ms Scheffer became a member of the Somerset Surf Life Saving Club. She was described by family and friends as a strong swimmer who would spend much of her free time during the summer months at the local beach.

During 2002 Ms Scheffer met and married Steven Scheffer. There were 3 children of the union, the eldest being a boy who was followed by 2 girls born 18 months apart. The couple separated in or about 2009.

Ms Scheffer was an energetic and industrious woman. She was self-employed as a naturopath and beauty therapist. In addition, Ms Scheffer regularly accepted casual work at the Burnie Arts and Entertainment Centre as an usher. As at January 2016 she

lived in Somerset with her children, aged 14, 10 and 9 years and was in a long-term relationship with Anthony Maierhofler, although the couple did not cohabit.

Circumstances Surrounding the Death:

On Thursday 7 January 2016 at approximately 5.00pm, Ms Scheffer and her two daughters drove to the Somerset Esplanade and parked at the Surf Club. There was a strong offshore breeze in effect which was causing spray to blow off the tops of waves further out to sea.

Once at the beach Ms Scheffer and her daughters have taken 2 boogie boards out into the ocean where they stood playing in water slightly above the waist of the youngest girl. After a brief period a larger wave has caused Ms Scheffer's youngest daughter to lose her footing and be swept further away from the shore. Ms Scheffer has gone to her aid, and both have been pushed further out into deeper water while clinging to the boogie board.

Ms Scheffer called to her eldest daughter to get help which she immediately did, by paddling to shore and attracting the attention of members of the Surf Club. Whilst trying to support her youngest daughter and manouvre the pair towards the beach Ms Scheffer's head has submerged briefly. Upon returning to the surface Ms Scheffer's youngest daughter noted that her mother was uncommunicative and that a small amount of blood was issuing from her mouth and nose. By using the boogie board Ms Scheffer's daughter was able to hold her mother's head above the surface of the water until assistance arrived.

Members of the Somerset Surf Life Saving Club have rendered assistance within minutes of the alarm being raised. Ms Scheffer was pulled from the water and CPR immediately commenced. Attempts to resuscitate Ms Scheffer have continued on the beach until ambulance staff arrived on scene at approximately 5:55pm. CPR continued in the ambulance enroute to the North West Regional Hospital and for approximately 20 minutes after Ms Scheffer's arrival at the Department of Emergency Medicine. Ms Scheffer could not be revived and was declared deceased by the attending medical practitioner.

On 11 January 2016 Dr Terry Brain (Pathologist) conducted a full post mortem examination. Dr Brain noted that both of Ms Scheffer's lungs were heavy and fluid logged. He expressed the view that the cause of death was consistent with drowning. I accept Dr Brain's opinion.

It is impossible to say with any certainty why Ms Scheffer suffered a catastrophic ingestion of water after being immersed for such a brief period. There is no indication that she was suffering from significant fatigue or that her physical capacity was otherwise effected. There is no evidence to suggest that Ms Scheffer's death by drowning was anything other than a tragic accident.

Comments and Recommendations:

In the circumstances there is no need for me to make any further comment or recommendations.

In concluding, I convey my sincere condolences to the family of Ms Scheffer.

Dated: 20 February 2017 at Launceston in the State of Tasmania.

Duncan Fairley
Coroner