
**FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS of Coroner Rod
Chandler following the holding of an inquest under the
Coroners Act 1995 into the death of Lynne Maree Bessell**

Record of Investigation into Death (With Inquest)

Coroners Act 1995

Coroners Rules 2006

Rule 11

I, Rod Chandler, Coroner, having investigated the death of Lynne Maree Bessell with an inquest held at Launceston in Tasmania make the following findings.

Introduction

Mrs Lynne Maree Bessell died at the North West Regional Hospital (“NWRH”) in Burnie on 13 March 2016. At the time of her death Mrs Bessell was the subject of a treatment order made pursuant to s39 of the *Mental Health Act 2013*. As such Mrs Bessell was a ‘person held in care’ as defined by s3 of the *Coroners Act 1995* (“the Act”). These circumstances compel a coroner to hold an inquest. (See s24(1)(b) of the Act).

On 2 March 2018 I held an inquest into Mrs Bessell’s death. These are my findings from that enquiry.

Background

Mrs Bessell was married to Gary James Bessell. They had one child, a daughter Naomi.

In about 2007 Mrs Bessell was diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder. Her treatment included periodic admissions to the Spencer Clinic, a mental health facility attached to the NWRH.

In around 2013 Mrs Bessell was diagnosed with colon cancer. It was initially treated with a right hemicolectomy (surgical removal of the proximal colon) after which she appeared to make a good recovery.

Circumstances Leading to the Death

Mrs Bessell’s cancer history required her to have regular blood tests to monitor the condition. One of these tests revealed that her cancer had returned. Her treatment options were discussed with her medical advisers and she elected to forego chemotherapy but instead treat the illness with alternative prescribed medications. By October 2014 Mrs Bessell required a constant level of care and she was admitted to Meercroft Care, an aged care facility at Devonport where she resided for approximately nine months. Mrs Bessell was then assessed to be sufficiently well to resume living at home. However, Mr Bessell reports that his wife’s mental state at this time became confused and muddled. She had difficulty managing her medications. She would also take herself for long walks at unusual times, sometimes at night.

In November 2015 it became necessary to re-admit Mrs Bessell to the Spencer Clinic because of her mental illness. On 18 December a 6 month treatment order was made requiring Mrs Bessell to remain an inpatient at the Spencer Clinic and to take certain

medications as prescribed by her treating team. Meantime Mrs Bessell's physical health continued to deteriorate because of her cancer. It was managed by the staff of the NWRH's medical ward.

On 13 March 2016 Mrs Bessell became critically unwell. She died with her husband present at about 3.15pm.

Post-Mortem Examination

This was carried out by forensic pathologist, Dr Donald Ritchey. In his opinion the cause of Mrs Bessell's death was metastatic carcinoma of the colon. I accept this opinion.

Findings, Comments and Recommendations

1. Pursuant to s28(1) of the Act I make these findings:
 - a. The identity of the deceased is Lynne Maree Bessell;
 - b. Mrs Bessell's death occurred in the circumstances described above;
 - c. The cause of death was metastatic carcinoma of the colon;
 - d. Mrs Bessell died at the NWRH in Burnie on 13 March 2016; and
 - e. Mrs Bessell was born at Zeehan on 19 November 1948 and was aged 67 years.
2. I am satisfied, pursuant to s28(5) of the Act that the care, supervision and treatment provided to Mrs Bessell by the NWRH including the Spencer Clinic was appropriate and of a satisfactory standard.
3. The circumstances of Mrs Bessell's death do not require me to make any comment or any recommendation.

Closing

It is apparent that Mrs Bessell suffered from serious and disabling illnesses in the latter years of her life and her care and management must have presented her husband and daughter with particular difficulties. I extend to them and to her other loved ones my sincere condolences for Mrs Bessell's passing.

I extend to Constable Steve Anderson my thanks for his assistance in this inquest.

Dated: 19th day of March 2018 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania

Rod Chandler
Coroner