



MAGISTRATES COURT of TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION



Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Simon Cooper, Coroner, having investigated the death of Timothy Guy Slater

Find, pursuant to Section 28(1) of the Coroners Act 1995, that:

- (a) The identity of the deceased is Timothy Guy Slater;
- (b) Mr Slater died in the circumstances described in this finding;
- (c) Mr Slater died sometime after 9 June 1987 at Fern Tree, Tasmania;
- (d) I am unable to find the cause of Mr Slater's death; and
- (e) Mr Slater was born in Franklin, Tasmania on 22 February 1949 and was aged 38 years at the time of his death; he was a married man whose occupation at the date of death was a medical orderly.

In making the above findings I have had regard to the evidence gained in the investigation into death. The evidence comprises the police report of death; an opinion of the forensic pathologist as to cause of death; relevant police and witness affidavits and medical records.

Jurisdiction:

The investigation of deaths in Tasmania is governed by the *Coroners Act* 1995. Section 21(1) of the *Act* provides:

"A coroner has jurisdiction to investigate a death if it appears to the coroner that the death is or may be a reportable death."

'Death' is defined in section 3 of the *Act* as including a suspected death.

'Reportable death' is defined in the same section as meaning, *inter alia*, a death which occurred in Tasmania and was unexpected or the cause of which is unknown.

Thus, if a Coroner suspects (on reasonable grounds) that a person has died and the death meets the definition of a reportable death, then that Coroner has jurisdiction to investigate.

For reasons which will become apparent in this finding I am satisfied that jurisdiction exists to investigate the disappearance of Timothy Guy Slater.

Mr Slater's Background:

Timothy was born at the Beaumont Hospital in Franklin, Tasmania on 22 February 1949, the son of Guy and Diana Slater. Timothy had three sisters: Penny, Janette and Deborah, and one brother, Mark.

At the time he went missing he was married to Carol. He and Carol had one child, David, who was aged three at the time. Carol was pregnant with their second child.

According to his mother Diana, when Timothy was growing up he was a bright and happy boy who received his education at a boarding school in Launceston.

Timothy was a keen bushwalker and regularly went bushwalking with a childhood friend, Patrick Nicholls. Timothy and Carol lived at Fern Tree. He walked regularly in the Fern Tree area. Diana reports Patrick Nicholls died in a mountaineering accident on Mt Cook in New Zealand not long before Timothy's disappearance and his friend's death weighed heavily upon him.

As an adult Timothy suffered from depression for which he received some treatment.

Circumstances of the Death:

Prior to being reported missing in June 1987 Timothy had twice before gone missing – first early in 1986 and then again in April 1987. On the first occasion he was found unconscious by police in bushland near Dunns Creek, Fern Tree. He had apparently taken an overdose of drugs. On the second occasion, shortly prior to his final disappearance, he returned home naked having left his clothing in bushland near Dunns Creek not far from his home.

In the lead up to his disappearance he was receiving treatment as an inpatient at the psychiatric ward at the Royal Hobart Hospital ('RHH').

His mother says, and I accept, that she visited him in the psychiatric ward at the RHH the day before he went missing, which on the evidence must have been 8 June 1987.

The next day, 9 June 1987, Timothy was picked up by his father Guy from the RHH. Guy took Timothy to 88 Summerleas Road, Fern Tree, the home which he shared with Carol and David.

The last confirmed sighting of Timothy was by Carol at about 3.00pm on the same day. Carol reports watching Timothy walk away from the family home. She asked him to wait for her as she was going to get David's boots and go with him but he did not wait. No one has ever seen Timothy since.

Police were notified that he was missing the next day. A coordinated search of the surrounding bushland was commenced essentially straight away. Apart from a torn up card that had been given to Timothy the previous day by Guy and some clothing found in the area of Dunns Creek (it will be remembered the Timothy went missing near Dunns Creek and was found unconscious there in April 1986), the search was unsuccessful. No trace of Timothy

was found. In addition to searching the area of Fern Tree an extensive media campaign was also conducted, again without success.

In January 2012 checks were conducted with all Tasmanian prisons, the Electoral Commission, the Department of Health and Human Services (both Housing and Mental Health Services), Lands Titles, Aurora, the Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, all State and Territory police jurisdictions' information holding systems, all State transport systems, Centrelink, Medicare, and the 10 most commonly used financial institutions in Australia. No record of Timothy Guy Slater was found.

No member of his family or anyone else has had any contact from Timothy since he was last seen by Carol at about 3.00pm on 9 June 1987. There is no evidence of a single sighting of Timothy since that date and time.

The circumstances satisfy me on the balance of probabilities that Timothy is dead and has been since on or after 9 June 1987. I find Timothy's death occurred in Tasmania and was, in terms of the Act, unexpected. In addition, because no trace of his body has ever been located I am not in a position to make any finding as to the cause of Timothy's death. It follows then that the cause of his death is unknown.

Comments and Recommendations:

The circumstances of death are not such as to require me to make any comments or recommendations pursuant to Section 28 of the *Coroners Act 1995*.

I convey my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Timothy Guy Slater

Dated: 9 July 2016 at Hobart in the state of Tasmania.

Simon Cooper
Coroner