



MAGISTRATES COURT of TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION



Record of Investigation into Death (Without Inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Olivia McTaggart, Coroner, having investigated the death of Gary John Hedrick

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

- a) The identity of the deceased is Gary John Hedrick;
- b) Mr Hedrick died as a result of drowning after falling in a drain while intoxicated;
- c) The cause of death was drowning; and
- d) Mr Hedrick died on 26 June 2016 at Strahan, Tasmania.

In making the above findings I have had regard to the evidence gained in the comprehensive investigation into Mr Hedrick's death. The evidence comprises an opinion of the pathologist who conducted the autopsy, relevant police and witness affidavits, medical records and reports, and forensic evidence.

Mr Hedrick was born in Burnie, Tasmania, on 29 January 1963 and he was aged 53 years. He was divorced and employed as a fish hand.

On the evening of 25 June 2016 Mr Hedrick was drinking at Hamers Hotel in Strahan before going to a private residence for further drinks. The address of the residence is 34 Meredith Street, Strahan, the occupants being Jade Goodson and Rebecca Barrett.

Mr Hedrick continued drinking until about 2.30am. By this time he was extremely intoxicated and unsteady on his feet. Despite being offered a bed at the residence he insisted on leaving. He made at least one telephone call in an attempt to secure a lift home. This telephone call was to Alexander Livingstone, who noticed the missed call later that morning.

Mr Hedrick left the residence on foot at about 3.00am and was accompanied by Jade Goodson for about 100 metres as they walked down Meredith Street and east onto Harvey Street. Mr Goodson watched Mr Hedrick walk along Harvey Street for some distance before he returned home. At some point subsequently Mr Hedrick returned to the Meredith Street and Harvey Street junction and fell face down into an open drain.

Mr Hedrick was located by a police officer at 8.30am on 26 June 2017. He was lying face-down in 15cm of water in the open drain, clearly deceased. He was identified to police by Mr Livingstone.

On 28 June 2016 an autopsy was conducted upon Mr Hedrick by State Forensic Pathologist, Dr Christopher Lawrence. He determined that the cause of Mr Hedrick's death was drowning. I accept Dr Lawrence's opinion as to cause of death. Toxicological testing of Mr Hedrick's blood revealed a very high blood alcohol level of 0.374g/100ml.

There were no witnesses to the incident and I am satisfied that there were no suspicious circumstances implicating any other person.

The evidence in the investigation indicates that Mr Hedrick probably became disoriented attempting to walk home due to the effects of the high level of alcohol he had consumed. It appears he that he may have attempted to turn around and return to 34 Meredith Street, as he was located only 40 metres from that address. Being impaired from alcohol he did not see the drain and fell face down into the water. The evidence suggests Mr Hedrick made attempts to get himself out of the drain but was unsuccessful. Sadly, he drowned. The quantity of alcohol consumed by Mr Hedrick played a major part in his fall into the drain and inability to extricate himself.

Comments and Recommendations:

The circumstances of Mr Hedrick's 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 Gary John Hedrick.

Dated: 25 September 2017 at Hobart in the State of Tasmania.

Olivia McTaggart
Coroner