



MAGISTRATES COURT of TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION



Record of Investigation into Death (without inquest)

*Coroners Act 1995
Coroners Rules 2006
Rule 11*

I, Stephen Raymond Carey, Coroner, having investigated the death of Freda Kate Norris

Find That:

- (a) The identity of the deceased is Freda Kate Norris ("Mrs Norris");
- (b) I am unable to determine the cause of Mrs Norris's death;
- (c) Mrs Norris died on a date unable to be determined but likely to have been on or about 13 June 1978 at an unknown location;
- (d) Mrs Norris was born in Hobart on 27 August 1924 and was aged 53 years at the time of her death;
- (e) Mrs Norris was a married woman whose occupation at the date of death was home duties; and
- (f) There is nothing to suggest the involvement of any other person in Mrs Norris's disappearance and death.

Circumstances Surrounding the Death:

Mrs Norris married Keith Glanville Norris (DOB 20/07/1925) on 16 October 1945, and following this she became a stay-at-home mother engaged in house duties for the remainder of her life. There were four children of this marriage: Cheryl Anne Norris (DOB 08/07/1948), Frances June Norris (Cooper) (DOB 04/05/1951), Helen Rosemary Norris (Terry) (DOB 21/04/1953) and Glanville Andrew Norris (DOB 17/11/1960). The family resided at 44 Coolstore Road, Huonville.

On the evening of Monday 12 June 1978, Mrs Norris was at home with her husband and son, Glanville. The other children, by this stage, had moved out of the family home. There is nothing unusual reported concerning this evening nor the period leading up to this evening save for the recent marriage of her daughter, Frances. At approximately 8:00am on Tuesday 13 June 1978, Mrs Norris's husband and son departed the residence and attended at AG & AJ Shield Pty Ltd for the purposes of their employment working in their apple packing shed at Huonville. They returned to the family home for lunch at which time they noted a handwritten note left by Mrs Norris stating that she was going to Hobart and that she may stay the night with her daughter, Cheryl, and then return on the afternoon bus. On the evening of Tuesday 13 June 1978, Mr Keith Norris drove to the bus stop on the Main Road at Huonville and met the bus from Hobart. Mrs Norris was not on the bus and Mr Norris

presumed that she was spending the night at her daughter's residence in Hobart. On Wednesday 14 June 1978, noting that Mrs Norris had not returned home, Mr Norris contacted his daughter and determined that Mrs Norris had not attended her residence. Mr Norris and Glanville then drove to Hobart and visited family members attempting to identify the movements and whereabouts of Mrs Norris without success. Their endeavours concluded late that night. The following morning, 15 June 1978, Mr Norris telephoned the Missing Persons Bureau at Tasmania Police, Hobart and reported Mrs Norris missing and described the circumstances of her disappearance.

A police investigation commenced on 15 June 1978 initially with the circulation of the description of Mrs Norris to various police stations in the southern area. In the following days the police investigation included contact with public hospitals, Salvation Army, City Mission, Lifeline and the St Vincent De Paul Society with no success. In addition, several family members were also interviewed with no information being available as to Mrs Norris's whereabouts. Newspapers articles in the Mercury occurred at about this time but little information was forthcoming.

It was identified that Mrs Norris had travelled by taxi, driven by Mrs Lovell, from her home to the bus stop on Main Road, Huonville at between 8:30am and 8:40am on 14 June 1978. Mrs Norris is described, at the time, as wearing casual clothing and appeared to be going shopping. She was carrying a shopping bag and a brown handbag and there was no indication that she was carrying any significant articles such as clothing.

On Tuesday 27 June 1978, the Huon River was searched by police personnel in boats and also Tasmania Police divers. On Wednesday 28 June 1978 a land search was conducted on both sides of the Huon River and Scenic Hill area by Tasmania Police cadets. On Thursday 29 June 1978, the land search continued on either side of the Huon River and the Scenic Hill area. These searches were supervised by Tasmania Police Search and Rescue personnel. Ongoing searches continued from time to time in the area of Sale Street, Channel Highway, Scenic Hill and Coolstore Road. Boat searches were conducted of the Huon River from Ranelagh to Kermadie. All these searches were unable to locate any sign of Mrs Norris. Police received some sightings from the public concerning Mrs Norris; however upon investigation no firm evidence was gathered as to the accuracy of these reports.

Mrs Norris left no indication of her intentions after leaving her home on 13 June 1978 save for the note she left referring to an intention to travel to Hobart. There was some indication that Mrs Norris had, in the past, suffered from depression, however there were no indications that she suffered to any significant extent at the time of her disappearance.

In June 1991, Mr Keith Norris instructed solicitors to make application to the Supreme Court seeking authority to swear to the death of his wife. This application was filed with the Supreme Court of Tasmania on 22 August 1991 and on 9 September 1991 an order was made by the Court permitting Mr Norris to swear to the death of his wife, such death having occurred on or about June 1978. On Wednesday 2 October 1991 Mrs Norris was registered pursuant to the *Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1895* as having died between 1 June 1978 and 30 June 1978, with the place of death recorded as unknown.

The Tasmania Police Missing Persons investigation was reactivated in 2014 and in January of that year significant contact was made to various medical, financial and state and federal instrumentalities concerning any detail of Mrs Norris, all without success. Enquiries were also made of interstate police also without success. Recent contact was made with members of Mrs Norris's family who advised that there has been no contact with or information regarding Mrs Norris since her disappearance.

I therefore conclude that Mrs Norris died on or about the date of her disappearance being 13 June 1978; however the extensive police investigation does not provide any detail as to where and precisely when she died nor the circumstances of her death.

I wish to convey my sincere condolences to Mrs Norris's family.

Dated: 18 March 2015 at Hobart in the state of Tasmania.

Stephen Raymond Carey
CORONER