



## CORONERS COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

<b>Inquest:</b>	Inquest into the death of Zoran Zivkovic
<b>Hearing date:</b>	24 September 2018
<b>Date of findings:</b>	24 September 2018
<b>Place of findings:</b>	NSW Coroners Court - Glebe
<b>Findings of:</b>	Magistrate Elizabeth Ryan, Deputy State Coroner
<b>Catchwords:</b>	CORONIAL LAW – reclusive deceased, body discovered some days after presumed death - cause of death cannot be ascertained.
<b>File number:</b>	2016/361460
<b>Representation:</b>	Coronial Advocate assisting the inquest: Sgt C Xanthos.
<b>Findings:</b>	<p><b>Identity</b> The person who died is Zoran Zivkovic, born 25 October 1968.</p> <p><b>Date of death:</b> Zoran Zivkovic died between 21 November 2016 and 1 December 2016.</p> <p><b>Place of death:</b> Zoran Zivkovic died at 30/45-51 Huntley Street, Alexandria NSW 2015.</p> <p><b>Cause of death:</b> The cause of Zoran Zivkovic's death is unknown.</p> <p><b>Manner of death:</b> Zoran Zivkovic died as a result of natural causes.</p>

Section 81(1) of the *Coroners Act 2009 (NSW)* [the Act] requires that when an inquest is held, the Coroner must record in writing his or her findings as to various aspects of the death.

These are the findings of an inquest into the death of Zoran Zivkovic.

## **Introduction**

On 1 December 2016 Zoran Zivkovic aged 48 years was found dead. He was lying on the floor of an unused commercial unit in Alexandria where he had been living. An autopsy examination was unable to ascertain the cause of his death.

Pursuant to section 27 of the Act, an inquest is required when the manner and cause of a person's death have not been sufficiently disclosed.

## **The role of the Coroner**

The Coroner must make findings as to the date and place of a person's death, and the cause and manner of death. Sometimes the evidence is not sufficient to allow all these findings to be made. Unfortunately this is the case with Mr Zivkovic's death.

In addition, pursuant to section 82 of the Act the Coroner may make recommendations in relation to matters which have the capacity to improve public health and safety in the future, arising out of the death in question.

## **Mr Zivkovic's life**

Mr Zivkovic was born in Croatia on 25 October 1968. He travelled to Melbourne in 1994 in order to get married. However the marriage did not go ahead, and he stayed in Australia despite his visa expiring in March 1995. At some point Mr Zivkovic moved to Sydney.

Mr Zivkovic had no family members in Australia and he did not settle anywhere for long. This may have been to avoid the attention of authorities, given his visa situation. It was perhaps for the same reason that he did not see a regular doctor.

Although Mr Zivkovic had very limited social interaction, he had a friendship with Mark Sperotto whom he met in the late 1990's through attending bible studies. Later Mr Sperotto moved to Perth, but he returned to Sydney in 2008 and occasionally met up with Mr Zivkovic. Mark Sperotto described Mr Zivkovic as a very private person who did not share personal details, and who moved around a lot.

How Mr Zivkovic supported himself financially is not clear, but it seems that another friend who lived in Canberra, Ms Nicola Pranjic, regularly provided Mark Sperotto with money to give to him.

Mr Sperotto told investigating police he had been worried for some time about Mr Zivkovic's health, as he had looked very sick and was having difficulty walking. However Mr Zivkovic had refused to see a doctor.

## **Events surrounding Mr Zivkovic's death**

On 17 November 2016 Mr Zivkovic texted Mark Sperotto asking him to get some groceries for him. Mr Sperotto bought the requested items and at around 6.00pm he took them to the Alexandria address which Mr Zivkovic had texted to him. He saw Mr Zivkovic standing on the second floor balcony of the address. Mr Zivkovic told him he couldn't come down to collect the groceries, as he couldn't walk properly.

Mr Sperotto hoisted the groceries up to Mr Zivkovic with a pole as he didn't think Mr Zivkovic wanted him to come up, being what he described as '*a secretive guy*'. He thought his friend looked particularly sickly and frail. This was the last time he saw him alive.

Four days later Mr Zivkovic texted Mr Sperotto but didn't leave a message. Mr Zivkovic's mobile phone shows a number of missed incoming calls after this date.

On 1 December Mr Sperotto and a friend went to the Alexandria address, because Ms Pranjic had expressed concern about not being able to contact him. Using a ladder Mr Sperotto climbed up to the balcony of the premises and stepped into the unit. He saw Mr Zivkovic lying face down on the floor and smelt a strong odour. Realising Mr Zivkovic was probably dead, he climbed down again and contacted police.

When police officers arrived they found Mr Zivkovic's body in a large open space on the second floor of the building. The room had the appearance of an office space, with bookshelves and a desk.

Mr Zivkovic was lying face down on the floor. He was wearing a singlet top but no pants. His face and body were partially decomposed and discoloured, and there were maggots and flies surrounding him. There was faecal matter and blood on the carpet near his feet, leading from a bed in the corner of the room. Near the bed was a large amount of toilet paper also covered in faeces.

There were no signs of forced entry to the premises. Police enquiries established that the owner of the premises had gone overseas and had arranged that Mr Zivkovic could occupy the space during that time. Soon afterwards however the premises was sold and police could not locate the former owner.

Police did not identify anything suspicious about Mr Zivkovic's death.

## **The autopsy report**

An autopsy examination was performed by forensic pathologist Dr Kendall Bailey.

Dr Bailey found Mr Zivkovic's body to be in an early stage of decompositional change. There were no visible injuries on his body. Dr Bailey found entrapped gallstones in the bladder, and abnormalities in the prostate suggesting an infection. She could not identify any other abnormalities. For this reason she did not find a

cause of death; however she commented there were no features to suggest the death was an unnatural one.

Dr Bailey noted Mr Zivkovic had no known treating doctor, and there was no medical history available.

### **Time and place of death**

The evidence enables the finding that Mr Zivkovic died at the premises where he was living.

As for the time of death, it is possible only to place this within a range of 21 November to 1 December 2016. It can be inferred that Mr Zivkovic was still alive when he sent the text to Mark Sperotto on 21 November. All incoming calls on his phone thereafter were missed.

### **Cause and manner of death**

Due to Mr Zivkovic's generally solitary life there is an absence of evidence about the circumstances of his death. The autopsy examination was not able to find a cause of death, and there are no background medical records to indicate a likely cause. Unfortunately therefore the cause of Mr Zivkovic's death remains undetermined.

However the evidence does enable a finding on the balance of probabilities that the manner of Mr Zivkovic's death was by natural causes. His body bore no injuries and police did not identify anything suspicious about his death. The evidence of his friend Mr Sperotto was that he had appeared very unwell in the weeks leading up to his death. There was nothing to suggest that he met with a fatal accident.

### **Findings required by s81(1)**

As a result of considering all of the documentary evidence and the oral evidence heard at the inquest, I am able to confirm that the death occurred and make the following findings in relation to it.

#### **Identity**

The person who died was Zoran Zivkovic, born 25 October 1968.

#### **Date of death**

Zoran Zivkovic died sometime between 21 November 2016 and 1 December 2016.

#### **Place of death**

Zoran Zivkovic died at 30/45-51 Huntley Street, Alexandria NSW 2015.

**Cause of death**

The cause of Zoran Zivkovic's death is unknown.

**Manner of death**

Zoran Zivkovic died of natural causes.

I close this inquest.

**Magistrate E Ryan**

Deputy State Coroner

Glebe

**Date**

24 September 2018