



**STATE CORONER'S COURT
OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

Inquest:	Inquest into the suspected deaths of Gheorghe Radu and Iudit Simionescu
Hearing dates:	9 June 2015
Date of findings:	9 June 2015
Place of findings:	NSW State Coroner Court - Glebe
Findings of:	Magistrate Michael Barnes, State Coroner
Catchwords:	CORONIAL LAW – missing persons
File number:	2004/260645 & 2004/260647
Representation:	Senior Sgt Harding assisting the State Coroner, Magistrate M. A. Barnes.

Findings:	<p>I find that the suspected deaths investigated by this inquest did occur.</p> <p>Identity of deceased The deceased persons were Gheorghe RADU born 29 August 1955 and Iudit SIMIONESCU born 8 June 1960.</p> <p>Date of death Both deceased persons died on or about 11 August 2001</p> <p>Place of death Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu died in New South Wales at an unascertained location</p> <p>Manner of death Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu were deliberately killed as a result of them and their killer(s) being involved in drug crime. The identity of the killer or killers is unascertained.</p> <p>Cause of death The cause of their death is unascertained</p>
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The Coroners Act 2009 (NSW) in s81 (1) requires that when an inquest is held, the coroner must record in writing his or her findings as to various aspects of the death or suspected death.

These are the findings of an inquest into the suspected deaths of Gheorghe Radu and Iudit Simionescu

Introduction

Gheorghe Radu and Iudit Simionescu were both members of the Sydney Romanian community. They had both been married before and had children with their respective spouses. They commenced a domestic relationship in 1999.

For some years prior to this Mr Radu had been heavily involved in distributing illicit drugs. He and Ms Simionescu also used illicit drugs.

In 2001, the couple were being investigated by members of the New South Wales Police Force Drug Squad when they disappeared. A couple of weeks after their disappearance, their car was found abandoned at Liverpool. They have not been seen by their relatives or friends since.

The inquest

Pursuant to s.27 of the *Coroner's Act 2009*, an Inquest is mandatory if the Coroner is of the view that it has not been sufficiently disclosed whether a person has died and/or whether any of the particulars of the death the Coroner must find have not been sufficiently ascertained.

Such uncertainty exists in relation to aspects of the suspected deaths of Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu. Accordingly an inquest was convened.

For reasons that will become apparent, the NSDWPF holds concerns it is not in the public interest for some of the information gathered during the investigation to be made public. Those concerns are based on the view that were the information in question made public it could:-

- Endanger the safety of confidential sources who provided the information;
- Reveal secret police methodology; and
- Potentially hinder the future investigation of serious crimes.

I accepted those submissions and directed that a redacted version of the statement of the officer in charge be accepted into evidence. I also directed that pursuant to s65(4) of the Act, a copy of the OiC's statement should not be provided to any party without my express authorisation.

The evidence

Background

Mr Radu immigrated to Australia on 15 September 1981. After about five years he returned to Romania and in 1988 he married Maria Botogan. In 1989, his wife joined Mr Radu in Australia. Over the next five years they had three children. They separated in December 1997 and commenced divorce proceedings. Mr Radu maintained regular contact with the children.

Ludit Szuc married Ovidiu Simionescu in Romania in 1978. They emigrated to Australia in 1980 or 81. They had two children. They divorced in the mid 90s.

In May/June 1999 Gheorge Radu and Ludit Simionescu commenced a relationship. They moved in together in March 2001 to a unit in Campsie and lived there until their disappearance in August 2001.

Events preceding the disappearance

In April 2000, Mr Radu left Australia to visit Romania. He returned on the 1 May 2000. Upon his return, Ms Simionescu informed him that a large amount of money had been stolen from their unit after a person forced entry to the unit. This was not reported to the police.

In 2000, Mr Radu purchased two businesses in the Moorebank area. He commenced renovations on a residence section upon one of the premises. In August 2000 he moved into the residence. Over the ensuing months Mr Radu reported break and enters at the premises to the police, alleging jewellery and money were stolen.

From early 2001 until their disappearance, Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu were one of the targets of a covert drug investigation undertaken by officers of the NSWPF Drug Squad. That task force revealed evidence that Mr Radu was heavily involved in major drug trafficking.

Lawfully intercepted telephone calls indicate that in July 2001, Mr Radu was becoming increasingly caught up in a dispute between members of a drug syndicate involving large amounts of money and/or drugs that were lost or not re-paid.

In early July 2001, Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu informed several people that they intended on travelling to Romania. They booked a trip on the 5 July 2001. They postponed the trip on the 13 July 2001 delaying their departure to the 10 August that year.

On the 1 August 2001, Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu attended Westmead Hospital and requested they be placed on a drug detoxification program. He stated he had been smoking heroin for about 9 months and Ms Simionescu stated she had been smoking heroin for about four and a half years. They attended the clinic on the 2 and 3 August 2001 and received medication to assist with their withdrawal symptoms. On the 6 August 2001 they failed to keep their appointment. When contacted by staff at the clinic, Ms Simionescu stated that they both felt they were strong enough to stop using without further assistance from the clinic. They also informed staff that there were going overseas the following week.

On the 9 August 2001, the couple again contacted their travel agent and delayed their trip until the 11 September 2001. Mr Radu informed his brother in law that they had to delay the trip to Romania because they had to sort out some problems

On the 10 August 2011, Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu attended Rogues Nightclub in the city. They met up with Ms Simionescu's daughter Anna Maria and two of her friends about 1:00am. They made plans to meet up that evening at Bay 33, a nightclub at Bayswater Road, Kings Cross. Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu left Rogues nightclub that morning at 3:00am.

About 10:30am 11 August 2001, Ms Simionescu exchanged SMS message with Anna Maria confirming their plans for that evening. This is the last communication Anna Maria had with her mother.

About midday on the 11 August 2001, Mr Radu attended his ex-wife's house to visit his children. She stated he appeared agitated during the visit. As he was leaving he gave her \$200 and stated he would see the children the following week.

During the afternoon of the 11 August 2001, Mr Radu was contacted by a friend inviting him to his birthday celebration at the Hilton Hotel. Mr Radu indicated he would probably attend with Ms Simionescu. Neither Mr Radu nor Ms Simionescu attended the party that evening.

The disappearance

On the 11 August 2001 Beatrice Simionescu received an SMS from her mother Ms Simionescu asking her to call. Beatrice tried to call her mother at 2:00pm however the phone was turned off. Anna Maria also tried to call her mother about 6:00pm and then consistently during the night to no avail.

Over the following week, Beatrice and Anna Maria spoke with Mr Radu's sister Valentina and realised they had not heard from him or Ms Simionescu since the 11 August.

On Monday the 20 August 2001, Anna Maria and Beatrice reported their mother Ms Simionescu missing to the police.

On 28 August 2001, Mr Radu's motor vehicle was located in Bathurst Street Liverpool. The vehicle was recovered and forensically tested by the police. No positive forensic evidence was located or found within the vehicle.

On the 23 October 2001, enquiries with banking institutions identified five accounts with the Commonwealth Bank, two of which contained a combined amount of over \$330K. The remaining three accounts were in debt for fewer than one thousand dollars each. There was no record of any account activity after the 11 August 2001.

On the 12 November 2001, Maria Radu and Mr Radu's sister Valentina attended Campsie Police Station and reported George missing.

Shortly after December 2001, Anna Maria went to the real estate agent and gained access to the unit at Campsie where Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu had lived. Inside she located rotten food on the stove which had been turned off, and salad prepared in a bowl in the kitchen. Her mother's mobile phone was located on the coffee table. All furniture was located intact and all clothing and toiletries appeared undisturbed. There was no sign of violence or damage within the unit. The bed was unmade clothing Mr Radu had worn to the nightclub on the 10 August 2001 was seen in the bedroom. Also located were Ms Simionescu and Mr Radu's Australian passports, birth certificates and Romanian identification.

On 9 December 2002, the NSW Crime Commission completed confiscation of assets proceedings on the property belonging to Mr Radu. An amount in excess of \$700,000 was forfeited. This was not contested by any person.

The Missing Persons Unit has conducted checks with Centrelink, Medicare, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, financial institutions and Australian Police Services. These have all indicated there has been no contact between these agencies or transaction on relevant accounts since the 11 August 2001.

Anna Maria Simionescu returned to Romania and spoke with relatives and friends to ascertain if anyone has seen or heard from Mr Radu or her mother, Ms Simionescu. No one she discussed the matter with has heard from either of them since their disappearance.

Since their disappearance, police have undertaken an extensive investigation without being able to prove what happened to the missing persons.

Both persons had committed and loving relationships with their children. It is highly likely that had either been alive they would have contacted their children in the intervening period since they were last seen on 11 August 2001.

Findings required by s81(1)

As a result of considering all of the documentary evidence and the oral evidence heard at the inquest, I conclude that Gheorghe Radu and Iudit Simionescu are dead and I make the following findings in relation to those deaths.

Date of death

On or about 11 August 2001

Place of death

Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu died in New South Wales at an unascertained location

Cause of death

The cause of death is unascertained

Manner of death

Mr Radu and Ms Simionescu were deliberately killed as a result of them and their killer(s) being involved in drug crime. The identity of the killer or killers is unascertained.

I close this inquest.

M A Barnes

NSW State Coroner
Glebe