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Inquest opens into deaths of two Roy Fagan residents

The sons of a 58-year-old woman who died from pneumonia after being held in care at the Roy Fagan psychiatric centre say they want to take their mother's death to a full coronial hearing.

AMBER WILSON Court Reporter

less than 2 min read February 7, 2020 - 10:01PM

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A coronial inquest will continue next month into the death of 58-year-old Mary Dickinson. Picture: MATT THOMPSON

A CORONIAL inquest has begun into the deaths of two women who were held in care under guardianship orders at Hobart's Roy Fagan psychiatric centre.

Coroner Olivia McTaggart heard yesterday that 81-year-old Margaret Whitney died in June last year after

she'd fallen in her bathroom at Roy Fagan, dying from blood loss when she underwent surgery to repair a broken femur.

The Coroners Court was also told Mary Dickinson, 58, died from pneumonia in January 2018.

Mrs Dickinson's two sons attended the court yesterday, flagging they wanted to go into a full evidentiary hearing over their "persistent concerns" over her care at Roy Fagan.

One of the men said his mother's dentures hadn't been removed from her mouth, and by the time the matter was addressed, "it was too late".

"Her mouth was black. She couldn't eat and it (her mouth) was ulcerated," he said.

Ms McTaggart said she would need to adjourn the hearing for a month while evidence was prepared, but added the material currently before her didn't "suggest a lack of care".

However, the court heard Ms Whitney's death had been less contentious, with counsel assisting, Deanne Earley, telling Ms McTaggart she would find the octogenarian had received "satisfactory care".

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She said Ms Whitney had been a resident at Respect Aged Care – St Ann's but was "often socially inappropriate", was "known to torment other residents", and often refused staff assistance for personal hygiene and toileting.

She was placed into care at Roy Fagan, with a public guardian making a request for a non-slippery bathroom surface. Then on June 29 last year, Ms Whitney was found on the floor in her bathroom with her leg twisted outwards.

She underwent surgery at the Royal Hobart Hospital the following day for a spiral fracture, but died after a substantial bleed during the operation.

Ms McTaggart said she would return her findings into Ms Whitney's death within a week, and adjourned Mrs Dickinson's hearing until March 4.

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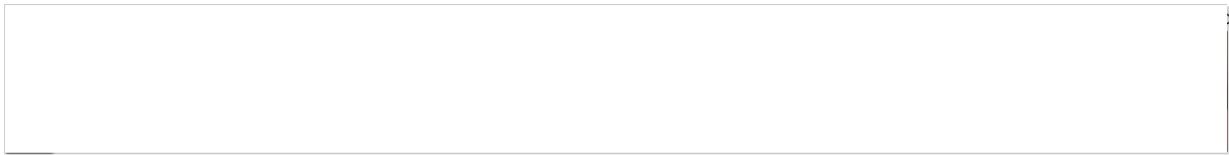
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