



MUNCCI

**Monash University National Centre for
Coronial Information**

developing and managing the

National Coroners Information System

ANNUAL REPORT

1 July 2002 - 30 June 2003

MUNCCI

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1. Preface

I am delighted to present the fifth annual report of the Monash University National Centre for Coronial Information (MUNCCI). This report details the activities that have been undertaken by MUNCCI in managing the National Coroners Information System (NCIS) during the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003. Although the last 12 months have presented particular challenges for MUNCCI, it has also been a period of considerable achievements. The significance of the NCIS as a tool to reduce the level of preventable death and injury was recognised during two high-level reviews of death investigation systems. The Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine had the pleasure of demonstrating the NCIS to the team leading the UK Fundamental Review of Death Certification and Coroner Services and to Dr Aneez Esmail, a medical advisor to the Shipman Inquiry, on their respective visits to Australia. In its report, the Review Team stated that a system such as the NCIS promises to be a “major innovation” in the provision of information about risks to public health and safety. It is gratifying that the potential of the NCIS to contribute to a modern system of death investigation is beginning to be recognised, nationally and internationally.

Approximately 20,000 new records were added to the NCIS during 2002/03, as well as vast improvements having been made to the data already on the system. The MUNCCI team was focussed on undertaking further improvements of the NCIS data quality and the depth of coded information. One of the team's most significant achievements in this area was the completion of an audit of NCIS coronial case data from 1st July 2000 to 31st December 2002, including the correction and completion of NCIS data in more than 15,000 cases.

2002/03 was also the year in which the NCIS truly came of age as a national database. Although Queensland has been contributing data to the NCIS since 2001, this data has not been accessible to NCIS users. With the first Queensland State Coroner now having been appointed, MUNCCI and the State of Queensland have executed a licence agreement that will see Queensland data becoming available to authorised current and future NCIS users. This is a highly significant achievement; one that will see a major increase in the value of NCIS data to death investigators, researchers and other organisations with an interest in public health and safety.

Those with an association with MUNCCI would be aware that funding for the NCIS has been an ongoing concern. Professor Cordner reported in his preface to last year's annual report that MUNCCI would not be seeking further assistance from the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) after SCAG generously agreed to extend developmental funding for NCIS during 2002/03. However, it became apparent during early 2003 that there was a willingness from the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to continue to provide funding for NCIS in the short to medium term. On behalf of the MUNCCI team, I would like to express my gratitude for the support provided for NCIS by each jurisdiction. I also wish to acknowledge the assistance provided by the Victorian Department of Justice in reviewing MUNCCI's business case and making recommendations to the Commonwealth, States and Territories on an appropriate future funding model for the NCIS. Although the model developed by the Victorian Justice Department had not been endorsed at the time of writing, the MUNCCI team

is confident that it will be able to secure ongoing financial support from Government.

In order to supplement anticipated revenue from Government and to enable further development of the NCIS, MUNCCI was also actively involved in creating and implementing an access fee regime for authorised users. MUNCCI undertook consultation with NCIS users in the development of its fee schedules and also commissioned the services of a qualified cost consultant. Access fees will be applied from 1 July 2003, with a significant discount in fees available to Government agencies who have contributed to core funding of NCIS. In order to ensure that NCIS data is available to appropriately qualified individuals and organisations who may not have the capacity to pay access fees, MUNCCI has also been engaged in creating and implementing a process to assess applications for fee relief. This process will also be put in place during the next financial year.

Other key achievements for the project team during 2002/03 included:

- installation of a major upgrade to the Local Case Management Systems developed by MUNCCI to increase functionality for the individual jurisdictions;
- implementation of a new NCIS search screen designed specifically to encourage coroners' use of the NCIS;
- development and implementation of an NCIS experts training program for Coronial staff in the use of the NCIS; and
- Design and completion of a pilot program in two Victorian Police Stations of the National Police Form.

After a period of stability in the Project Manager role, MUNCCI was saddened to farewell Rebecca Smith, MUNCCI's Project Manager from September 2001 until April 2003. Rebecca is currently on maternity leave and, although she will not be returning to MUNCCI, Rebecca will be re-joining the VIFM in a training and advocacy role. Rebecca has been instrumental in NCIS' continued growth and development during 2002/03 and I wish her all the best in her new role. Karen Peasley, previously employed by MUNCCI as the Quality Assurance Officer, stepped into the Project Manager position after Rebecca's departure. Karen resigned from the position in May 2003 to take up a new role and was replaced by Kristen Murray, on secondment from the Department of Justice, in June 2003. MUNCCI was also pleased to welcome Edward Mulvenna to the team in September 2002, when Edward was appointed to provide administrative and financial support, and to Celia Smith, who came to MUNCCI as a youth trainee. My thanks go to the MUNCCI team, who have continued to bring a high level of dedication, professionalism and enthusiasm to their work over the last 12 months.

Associate Professor David Ranson, Acting Director, MUNCCI, Acting Director, Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, Monash University

2. Executive Summary

This is the fifth Annual Report of the Monash University National Centre for Coronial Information (MUNCCI). For information regarding the history of MUNCCI and the development of the NCIS please see our previous Annual Reports and our Business Plan 1999 – 2002 (available on our web site at <http://www.ncis.org.au>).

2.1 Major Achievements

One of the most significant achievements during 2002/03 was the recognition of the importance of the NCIS in modern death investigation systems. The team undertaking the UK Fundamental Review of Death Certification and Coroner Services visited the State Coroner's Office and VIFM in January 2003, and were given a demonstration of the NCIS. In its report, published on 4 June 2003, the Review Team found that NCIS "*promises to be a major innovation in the provision of information to coroners and others on public health and safety risks.*"

Dr Aneez Esmail, the Medical Advisor to The Shipman Inquiry, also visited Victoria during 2002/03 and was given a demonstration of the NCIS. Dr Esmail's discussion of systems of death investigation in other jurisdictions is contained in chapter 18 of the third report arising from The Shipman Inquiry. After describing how the NCIS operates, Dr Esmail commented that a system such as the NCIS is "plainly necessary" for the creation of a modern system of death and injury prevention.

The report arising from the UK Fundamental Review can be viewed at <http://www.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm58/5831/5831.htm> (see p. 294) and the second volume of The Shipman Inquiry report can be viewed at <http://www.the-shipman-inquiry.org.uk/thirdreport.asp>

Other major achievement included:

Funding

- Commenced negotiations with State and Commonwealth Governments for a new funding regime for the ongoing operation of the NCIS from July 2003 onwards;
- Finalised the development of a user pays system to commence on 1 July 2003.

Data Quality

- Completed a complete quality audit of the database;
- Continued a nationwide analysis of all data entry processes resulting in the identification of issues for which solutions are being, or have been, developed and implemented;
- Continued significant clearance of data entry backlog in a number of jurisdictions.

Technical

- Completed installation of a major upgrade to the Local Case Management Systems developed by MUNCCI to increase functionality for the individual jurisdictions;
- Implemented a secure and regular information transfer method for the upload of coronial data from all jurisdictions;
- Completed coding and systems analysis in relation to the defined set of NCIS enhancements captured in the new National Police Form.

Database Enhancements

- Finalised Queensland licence agreement allowing release of Queensland data held on NCIS to death investigators and authorised third party users;
- Implemented a new NCIS search screen designed specifically to encourage coroners' use of the NCIS;
- Continued to provide authorised access to all nominated death investigation staff including coroners; clerks; coroners/police assistants; forensic, medical, and scientific staff; and coroners' researchers across Australia;
- Continued identification of strategies to improve the quality and quantity of data on drug-related deaths in conjunction with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, Drug Strategy Unit;
- Designed and completed a pilot program in two Victorian Police Stations of the National Police Form;

Training

- Continued delivery of training program to third party users of the NCIS;
- Continued delivery of specialised training programs to death investigation staff;
- Developed and implemented an NCIS experts training program for Coronial staff in use of the NCIS.

Service Provision

- Obtained approval for increased access permissions for coronial staff and police assistants to the coroner to permit national searching of the system on behalf of coroners;
- Continued provision of prompt and effective help desk support for coronial data entry staff and third party users;
- Continuation of a regular publication for Coroners called "Fatal Facts" that provides a summary of recent findings categorised by topics;
- Provision of data extraction and analysis service in response to requests;
- Provision of regular data extracts to certain third party users;
- Provision of regular data downloads to the Australian Bureau of Statistics to assist in their task of cause of death coding and reduce their need to visit the individual coroners' officer.

2.2 Review against Objectives for 2002/2003

During 2001/02, a number of objectives were identified for 2002/03. A report of progress against these key objectives follows:

Develop viable long term funding strategy including fee-for-service;

- Near finalisation of negotiations with Commonwealth and State Governments for continued core funding of the NCIS from 2003-2007.
- Completed development and implementation of a fee-for-service model for third party users

Implement enhancements to the NCIS to provide for additional variables based on the data items in the new National Police Form;

- Incorporated new fields into the NCIS for the additional data items from the National Police Form.

Continue to systematically implement the NCIS Quality Assurance Plan;

- Completed quality audit of NCIS coronial case data from 1st July 2000 to 31st December 2002 with a 'closed' status.

Complete privacy audit of NCIS and develop new policy/statement in response to new legislation;

- Identified relevant privacy issues associated with the NCIS
- Currently seeking government/legal advice on these issues which will determine whether a new policy needs to be written

Finalise MUNCCI/NCIS Security Procedures Manual;

- Not completed.

Further enhance help desk function to allow for automatic email notification;

- Help Desk staff automatically notified via email whenever a help desk call is logged and allocated to their name.

Develop research policy and provide research service within approved guidelines;

- Undertook data extraction and analysis for third party users and external parties throughout 02/03, subject to coronial approval with certain informal processes followed. These processes have been combined into a formal research policy document, currently before the Acting Director.
- Submitted a proposal to conduct research on child death to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging – Injury Prevention Unit.
- Continued to work with jurisdictions' toxicology offices, the Department of Health and Ageing (Drug Strategy Unit) and the Inter-Governmental Committee on Drugs to assist in securing funding for the implementation of proposed drugs enhancements;
- Undertook discussions with the Victorian and Tasmanian toxicology labs regarding the transfer of toxicology information.

Strengthen relationships with existing stakeholders to further identify and satisfy their needs;

- Continued on an ongoing basis.

Establishment of a NCIS users group;

- Put on hold until funding secure. Interest has been expressed by a number of users though to be involved in this group.

Identify and commence marketing strategies to ensure long term viability;

- Conducted initial discussions concerning some sponsorship opportunities and developed a proforma de-identified newsletter subscription service for private organisations. Sought approval to develop the concept from State/Chief Coroners.
- Undertook initial discussions with consultants as part of the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development's 'Grow Your Business Program' about marketing NCIS to potential new users.

Continue to provide training to NCIS users where required, in particular, coroners and their staff;

Development and implementation of NCIS Experts training program

- Undertook experts training in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania

Continue to manage the NCIS within budget

- Managed the NCIS within budget and ensured that operational costs are transparent (see section 7 for more information).

Develop updates of technical and supporting documentation as required;

Finalise Licence Agreement with Queensland;

- Finalised in June 2003.
- Developed and implemented Service Level Agreements with all relevant jurisdictions for support and maintenance of the Local Case Management System;

Complete technical development of the single Local Case Management System and release the product to all participating jurisdictions.

- Completed development and release of LCMS to all jurisdictions except Queensland, which is undertaking software installation.

2.3 Objectives for 2003/2004

A number of objectives have been developed for 2003/04. They include:

Developing a future strategic direction for NCIS

- Developing a business case for 2004-07
- Reviewing the governance structures for MUNCCI, being the MUNCCI Board and NCCCI and make modifications where appropriate with approval from relevant authority
- Continuing discussions with MUARC about a potential linkage with the VISAR injury database
- Improving marketing strategy and potential client/user base identification
- Continuing to raise the national and international profile of the NCIS
- Establishing NCIS user group and investigate potential enhancements to the NCIS such as automatic case notification or portal technology

Developing sound policies and procedures

- Analysing the NCIS in terms of new privacy legislation and revise privacy protocols and policies if necessary
- Finalising research policy and undertaking data extraction and analysis service within approved guidelines
- Streamlining process for obtaining Coronial approval to release research reports
- Finalising MUNCCI/NCIS Security Procedures Manual

Responsible financial management

- Continuing to manage the NCIS within budget
- Securing ongoing core funding for the NCIS
- Investigating supplementary income from private industry through possible sponsorship of the NCIS, and/or publication of relevant industry newsletters

Improving depth of NCIS data

- Obtaining full text autopsy reports, toxicology reports and coronial findings for Queensland coronial cases
- Obtaining South Australian autopsy and toxicology reports from South Australian Forensic Science Centre
- Continuing work on implementation of the National Police Form
- Continuing to liaise with toxicology laboratories to facilitate transfer of toxicology data set to NCIS and investigate funding options to support this process

Ongoing improvements to data quality

- Continuing to liaise with jurisdictions to improve case closure and document attachment rates
- Including ICD-10 cause of death codes provided by ABS into the NCIS data set
- Continuing to systematically implement the NCIS Quality Assurance Plan

High quality user support services

- Continuing to provide help desk services for contributing jurisdictions and third party users
- Developing updates of technical and supporting documentation as required

- Visiting Western Australian and Queensland Coroners Office to provide NCIS expert training and to examine data entry processes and procedures
- Completing implementation of NCIS Experts training program and provide regular Search Tips newsletters

3. MUNCCI Board and Staff

MUNCCI is a research centre of Monash University. It is a consortium of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM - which is both the Department of Forensic Medicine and a Victorian statutory authority under the Department of Justice), the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) and the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine.

3.1 Board of Management

The Board's functions are to:

1. Develop and approve strategic directions for the MUNCCI.
2. Monitor the implementation and operation of the National Coroners Information System.
3. Provide advice and support necessary for the Centre to discharge its responsibilities to the University, State and Territory coroners and key stakeholders.
4. Oversee the provision by the Centre of services provided in accordance with agreements made with user agencies.
5. Receive and approve the Centre's budget statements.
6. Receive and approve the Centre's annual reports to the University.
7. Ensure the timely and effective completion of the work program of the Centre.
8. Play an active role in ensuring effective communication between the Centre and the University, State and Territory coroners (including the Australian Coroners' Society) and key stakeholders.

3.2 MUNCCI Board meetings during 2002/03

The Board met in December 2002 and February 2003. An important issue for the Board was ratification of guidelines for reporting of Issues of Concern for Public Health and Safety (IOCPHS). Both the licence agreements entered into between the jurisdictions and MUNCCI and access agreements entered into between MUNCCI and authorised third party users stipulate that users must immediately notify MUNCCI if any issue of concern to public health and safety is identified in the course of reviewing or analysing data from the NCIS. At its December meeting, the MUNCCI Board endorsed draft IOCPHS guidelines developed by MUNCCI. After receiving endorsement from the State/Chief Coroners, the guidelines were released on an interim basis and are available through the NCIS website. The interim guidelines will be further reviewed by MUNCCI and the MUNCCI Board during 2003/04.

During 2002/03, the MUNCCI Board provided significant input into the development of the access fee regime for NCIS users. This issue is discussed further at item 6. The MUNCCI Board was also involved in discussions concerning future funding for the NCIS; access rules, and quality assurance.

The MUNCCI Board agreed to defer further scheduled meetings in 2002/03 until NCIS funding arrangements were finalised.

MUNCCI Board membership follows:

Board members:

Chairperson: Professor John McNeil

Members:

Professor Stephen Cordner	Director VIFM, Director MUNCCI
Prof Olaf Drummer	Head Scientific Services VIFM
Dr James Harrison	Director of the Research Centre for Injury Studies Flinders University (incorporating the National Injury Surveillance Unit)
Graeme Johnstone	State Coroner of Victoria (representing the Australian Coroners' Society)
Rebecca Smith/Karen Peasley/ Kristen Murray	NCIS Project Managers 2002/03
Professor Joan Ozanne-Smith	Chair of Injury Prevention, MUARC
Assoc Professor David Ranson	Acting Director, VIFM

3.3 NCIS Project Team

There were a number of changes in personnel at MUNCCI during 2002/03. MUNCCI's Project Manager since September 2001, Rebecca Smith, left MUNCCI in April 2003 to have her second child. Rebecca was replaced as Project Manager by Karen Peasley, who had previously worked at MUNCCI as the team's Quality Assurance Officer. Karen was in the Project Manager position between April and June 2003, when she resigned to take up a new position. Kristen Murray was seconded from the Victorian Department of Justice in June 2003 as MUNCCI's Project Manager.

Jessica Pearse continued as MUNCCI's Senior Project Officer during 2003. During that time, Jessica undertook a range of tasks including implementing improvements to data transfer to MUNCCI from local jurisdictions, undertaking the 'NCIS Experts' training program and training of third party users, coroners and staff, and undertaking data extraction and analysis in response to requests from authorised NCIS users and other interested parties. Jessica was supported by Kerryn Mulvenna, MUNCCI's Project Officer during 2002/03. In June 2003, Kerryn returned to the Office of Public Prosecutions, from where she had been seconded to the MUNCCI project team. Kerryn is continuing to work with MUNCCI on a part-time basis, and is focussing on the national police form and drugs enhancement project.

Edward Mulvenna joined the MUNCCI team on a part-time basis in June 2002 to provide assistance with the quality assurance process and to provide technical, financial and administrative support to MUNCCI. Edward became a full-time team member in September 2002.

The merger of the MUNCCI IT team with the VIFM's information technology group successfully continued during 2002/03. Jarrod Boxall, a Programmer/Data Analyst, provided full-time support to MUNCCI during 2002/03. Aldo Morales also provides part-time IT programming assistance to MUNCCI, and MUNCCI also receives IT high-level advice and assistance from the Manager of the IT group.

MUNCCI was joined by Celia Smith, a youth trainee working as part of the YES program. Celia provided administrative assistance and support to MUNCCI from September 2002 to June 2003, when she returned to New Zealand.

MUNCCI

The staff composition during 2002/03 was as follows:

- **Rebecca Smith** Project Manager (July 2002 – April 2003)
- **Karen Peasley** Project Manager (April 2003 – May 2003)
- **Kristen Murray** Project Manager (June 2003 –)
- **Jessica Pearse** Senior Project Officer
- **Kerryn Mulvenna** Project Officer
- **Marde Hoy** Project/Application Officer
- **Edward Mulvenna** Administration Officer (from June 2002)
- **Celia Smith** Administration Officer (September 2002 – June 2003)
- **Sue Wood** Quality Assurance Officer
(on secondment from National Centre for
Classification in Health - Sydney)
- **Jarrold Boxall** Programmer/Data Analyst
- **Aldo Morales** Programmer

4. National Coordination Committee for Coronial Information (NCCCI)

The NCCCI is the principal forum for discussion and agreement on modifications of significance to the database or the administrative or policy arrangements which have been settled in the establishment of MUNCCI. The NCCCI continued to develop this role during 2002/03. Its principle focus was on future funding for the NCIS and development of a funding strategy, privacy issues, and NCIS data quality. The NCCCI is also encouraging of MUNCCI exploring possible new governance arrangements for the NCIS. Governance issues are likely to be further considered during 2003/04.

The NCCCI met in July, November and December 2002. At the July meeting, NCCCI members were informed that MUNCCI was developing a funding strategy for distribution to and consideration by the NCCCI. The draft business case was circulated to NCCI members prior to the November meeting and considered in detail at the December meeting. The NCCCI provided constructive comment and feedback on the draft business case, which resulted in it being later revised. This issue is further discussed in section 6.

Membership of the NCCCI for 2002/03 and the organisation members represented are set out in Schedule 1.

5. MUNCCI Activities

5.1 Technical Development and Implementation

2002/2003 continued to focus upon maintaining the NCIS Core Data Set, and further developing the MUNCCI Case Management Systems (CMS). The new versions of the CMS have been installed in every jurisdiction (excepting Queensland), with all documents and the majority of data now being transferred via an upgraded secure encryption protocol.

The current status of data transfer for each jurisdiction is indicated in the table below.

Table 1: Status of data transfers from local case management systems

State / Territory	New version of Local System Installed	Encryption protocol used	Transfer frequency
ACT	June 2003	SSH2	Weekly
QLD	Awaiting software at QLD end	VPN	Nightly
NT	October 2002	SSH2	Nightly
SA	December 2002	SSH2	Nightly
TAS	February 2003	SSH2	Nightly
WA	May 2003	SSH2	Weekly
NSW	N/A	SSH2	Nightly
VIC	N/A	SSH2	Nightly

Achievements during 2002/2003 within the area of technical development and implementation have included:

- Establishment of a secure SSH2 encryption protocol for document uploads for ACT, South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.
- Upgrade of the Local CMS applications from Version 3.0 to Version 4.0 in Tasmania, ACT, Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia. Queensland will be upgraded to this new version as soon as new software is installed in their coroner's office. The new version contained changes to the interface to allow easier user navigation, as well as incorporating data entry rules for data validation purposes. Initial feedback from the jurisdictions indicate using Version 4.0 for data entry has been more time effective and is an improvement on the earlier versions. The jurisdictions were provided with the new software version at no cost other than installation travel expenses.
- Modifications to the user interface have included:
 - Full release of the coroners search screen to all users

- Ability to access full case records via a hyperlink from the initial results of a query design search.
- Automatic attachment of finding documents generated by the local South Australian CMS.
- Re-design and release of NSW data entry screen to incorporate user requested changes. These included added functionality items such as the ability to view closed cases, the ability to view the full case record pages if necessary and easier document attachment, with other changes made to enhance the useability of the screen. Data entry rules were also incorporated to match those in CMS Version 4.0.
- Ongoing discussions were also held with the following agencies to facilitate automatic document transfer to the NCIS:
 - South Australian Forensic Science Centre – SA autopsy and toxicology documents
 - Newcastle Department of Forensic Science – Newcastle post mortem reports
- Development of data extracts that combine fielded data with links to full text documents also contained within the extract.

5.2 Queensland Licence Agreement

In June 2003, the Licence Agreement between the State of Queensland and Monash University was signed. This means that Queensland data will soon become available to Coroners, death investigators and authorised third party users, making the NCIS a truly national database. MUNCCI is extremely excited by this development. There are approximately 8300 cases from Queensland stored on the NCIS at the present time, and access to this data will greatly assist Death Investigation and Third Party users alike. MUNCCI anticipates that access permissions for Category 1 death investigation users from all other participating jurisdictions will be updated later in 2003 to enable access to Queensland data. MUNCCI is also liaising with the Queensland State Coroner and the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH) to facilitate access to Queensland data by current and potential future third party users. As soon as data access protocols have been finalised, users will be notified in writing. MUNCCI anticipates that all authorised users will have access to Queensland data by the end of the year.

5.3 National Death Investigation Form

As reported in the 2001/02 annual report, MUNCCI has been liaising with Police Commissioners to progress the development of a standard police form for investigation of death. The implementation of a standard national form will improve the consistency, comparability and comprehensiveness of coronial information across all jurisdictions.

During 2002/03, MUNCCI continued to develop a proposed form in consultation with key stakeholders, including police, coroners and death and injury prevention experts from all jurisdictions in Australia. The data set to be collected from the national death investigation form includes information related to deaths which have involved drugs/alcohol/poisons; drowning/water; weapons/ firearms;

fire/burns; products; suspected suicide; transport; work and unexpected infant/child death. The form has the support of all State and Chief Coroners in Australia. MUNCCI is now working towards implementing the form in each jurisdiction.

A significant achievement during 2002/03 was the Victorian pilot of the proposed form. The proposed form was piloted in Bendigo and Frankston police stations between 1 December 2002 and 28 May 2003. At the conclusion of the pilot, MUNCCI conducted an audit of all the police forms received. Throughout the pilot period, a total of 86 forms were received. Of those 27 required the police informant to complete a specialist section or sections (including for example drowning deaths and drug related deaths). MUNCCI undertook an audit of the generalist and specialist sections of the police form. Although well received by participating police officers and State Coroner's assistants, the pilot process revealed that the 'user friendliness' of the police form could be improved. In response to this concern, MUNCCI undertook discussions with the Australian Federal Police, who are also developing a police form, to identify ways in which the Victorian form could be improved. Early in 2003/04, MUNCCI will be consulting with members of the drowning module and drugs module stakeholders to discuss further specific enhancements to these specialist sections of the national form. MUNCCI will be seeking appropriate Coronial and Police approval for any further changes to the form arising from this consultation process.

5.4 Drugs Enhancements Project

As noted in the last annual report, after liaison with the toxicology managers in each jurisdiction, MUNCCI prepared a submission to the Inter-Governmental Committee on Drugs (IGCD) regarding the costs associated with direct transfer of the toxicology data set information to the NCIS. The IGCD agreed to refer the submission to the Monitoring and Evaluation Coordination Committee (MECC), which was then to consider the financial implications for their own jurisdiction.

MUNCCI has continued to monitor this situation, however to date, only one formal response has been made in from Tasmania, which indicated that the funds required to allow this direct transfer of toxicology data were unlikely to be forthcoming. Despite the reluctance of the various jurisdictions to fund the system modifications required, MUNCCI has begun to investigate possible methods for transfer within existing budgetary means, with Tasmania and Victoria to be the first jurisdictions tackled.

MUNCCI will also continue to work on incorporating the required data fields into the NCIS interface to allow the receipt of this additional data once it becomes available.

The fields for the additional data about drug related deaths to be collected from the National Police Form has been incorporated into the NCIS data set, along with the other information to be collected from the national form. This will allow users to search upon particular elements associated with drug related deaths, such as prior history of drug use, route of administration etc once the national form is implemented, and the data uploaded.

The document compiled by MUNCCI which outlines the glossary of terms used by pathologists in describing the cause of death in drug related cases has been made available to authorised NCIS users. It has been published in the Documents section of the NCIS database, accessible to authorised users once they have logged on.

5.5 Data Analysis

As mentioned in the last annual report, one of the objectives for MUNCCI in 2002/2003 was to increase the range of activities undertaken by MUNCCI staff using data from the NCIS. This has been achieved, with a notable increase in the number of data requests from coroners and third party organisations coming into MUNCCI.

A number of data requests have been performed using the NCIS during 2002/2003, and have included the following:

- A national search on All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) deaths for Victorian State Coroner. This resulted in a joint inquest, media releases and television reports regarding safety concerns associated with ATV's, mention hearing with interested parties regarding ATV manufacturing issues, and generation of a report on ATV injuries by MUARC. Ongoing monitoring of these types of deaths is continuing at the request of the Victorian State Coroner.
- Ongoing monitoring of plastic bag asphyxia deaths are also continuing at the request of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, relating to the original search for these types of deaths conducted in 2001/2002 and outlined in last years annual report.
- A report on fire-related deaths in South Australia was prepared for the SA Metropolitan Fire Brigade who needed figures to present to the relevant Minister
- A report on the number of suicides in particular municipalities have been conducted for several local councils
- Information on the number of Dothepin overdoses nationally was requested by a Victorian Coroner and incorporated into a coronial finding
- The NSW Police requested the proportion of suicides in New South Wales that involved drugs or alcohol, to provide these figures to a parliamentary committee.

In line with the development of a user pays system, MUNCCI has developed a Research Policy which specifies the processes and fees associated with producing such information for third party users. This policy is currently awaiting approval from the relevant authorities.

Finally, investigations during 2002/2003 have been undertaken to determine coronial approval for regular newsletter updates, generated from the data on NCIS. Each of these newsletters would focus on a particular type of death/industry area, and contain summarised, de-identified information about deaths on NCIS that relate to that subject area. It is hoped that should coronial approval for this process be achieved, it could be a source of revenue MUNCCI could obtain from various public and private subscriptions.

5.6 Fatal Facts

During 2002/03, MUNCCI developed and produced 'Fatal Facts'; a publication designed for exclusive distribution to the coroners and coronial registrars around Australia. It outlines recent coronial findings that have been uploaded to the NCIS since the last edition and whether such findings include recommendations. The content is limited to findings involving external cause deaths, except where recommendations or comments have been made in relation to natural cause deaths. Fatal Facts also includes special features, such as the "Coroner's

Contribution”, which summarises interesting findings made by Australian coroners. A further feature is the MUNCCI research update, which outlines research that MUNCCI has undertaken recently.

Three editions of Fatal Facts were produced during 200/03. Feedback from State and Territory coroners and registrars has been overwhelmingly positive. Fatal Facts is seen as a valuable means through which to disseminate information about the types of deaths that are being reported in each jurisdiction, and to inform coroners of any recommendations that have been made at the conclusion of inquests.

5.7 Quality Assurance

The *NCIS Quality Assurance (QA) Plan* has been used as the foundation for NCIS quality improvement activities over the last 12 month period. The QA strategy for the NCIS is to develop, maintain and review the methodology and processes for the assessment and improvement of the quality and completeness of NCIS data through the implementation of a systematic monitoring and training program. The NCIS QA plan states specific quality targets, including *Completeness* – the database includes all eligible cases and all relevant data fields are complete, *Timeliness* – cases are completed and closed as quickly as possible by coronial data entry staff, *Validity and reliability* – the coded data reflects true values and is consistent across all Australian states.

A considerable improvement in NCIS data quality and depth of coded information has been achieved with the undertaking of a comprehensive audit of NCIS coronial case data from 1st July 2000 to 31st December 2002 of those cases with a ‘closed’ status. The audit included the correction and completion of NCIS data in more than 15,000 cases, and the design and management of a MS Access database to keep a comprehensive record of all changes made to the NCIS. In addition to case changes, duplicate cases within a jurisdiction and medical certificate cases were identified and removed from the NCIS following consultation with the relevant jurisdictions. A major tool in the audit has been the use of Structured Query Language (SQL) statements on Informix software to retrieve NCIS data that is incomplete or non-compliant with NCIS coding conventions and data dictionary standards.

As expected, the audit has highlighted both coder and system errors. Subsequently, MUNCCI will continue to provide expert coder training, feedback and advice to coronial data entry staff. Enhancements have also recently been made to local coronial systems to incorporate automatic data verification checks to reduce the occurrence of incomplete data. Following a period of analysis, a detailed audit report will be issued to coroners, MUNCCI management and associated committees. This review should be useful to the jurisdictions to allow them to see the standard of their own individual data quality and ensure improvements are made at a local level when required. An audit of coronial cases that were closed in January 2003 has commenced and this systematic monthly review of data forms the basis of the ongoing NCIS QA process.

5.8 Access Regime

The NCIS access regime continued to be governed by the instruments approved by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General at their July 2000 meeting. These are the template licence agreement, NCIS access agreement, NCIS privacy protocols (attached as schedule 8 to the licence agreement) and an

information sheet to establish the procedure to be followed in making an application for NCIS access.

The Access regime developed by MUNCCI and based upon the instructions of participating State and Chief Coroners continued to distinguish between Category 1 users (Coronial Users) and Category 2 users (Third Party Users). Category 1 users includes coroners and clerks; coronial police; coroners' researchers; forensic, medical, and scientific staff. The number of Category 1 users increased during 2002/03. Currently, there are over 200 users in this category. Dedicated training of Category 1 users based at the Glebe and Westmead offices in New South Wales, and at the Coronial Services Centre in Victoria, was undertaken during 2002/03. Category 2 users are restricted to government and research agencies and specified not-for profit public health and safety agencies. The number of category 2 third party users increased during 2002/03. At 30 June 2003, 82 authorised third party organisations have applied for NCIS access, with approximately 50 currently accessing the database. The number of individual users increased from 115 at 30 June 2002 to 168 at the same date in 2003.

The information sheet and survival guide were also updated during this period. New versions of these materials are contained on the NCIS website. Guidelines for the reporting of issues of concern for public health and safety by NCIS users were also made available on the NCIS website during 2002/03.

Version 6 application form

During 2002/03, the application form was updated from version 5 to version 6, after version 6 received the approval of the Monash University Ethics Committee. Version 6 contained some significant amendments from version 5, consistent with MUNCCI's commitment to data security and privacy issues. Applicants are now required to:

- Select only whether Level 1 or Level 2 access is required, with check boxes next to each individual data item removed.
- Specify why access is required to each individual identifying data item (such as name, date of birth, residential address, police summary of circumstances, and pathology, toxicology and finding text reports).
- Specify with a '1' for Level 1 or a '2' for Level 2 which level of access is required and for which state/s.
- Complete Question 13 of the SCERH Application Form - Part A (dealing with privacy issues) if access to level 1 data is sought.

Indigenous origin information

An important issue arising in 2002/03 concerned NCIS users' access to indigenous origin information through the database. Given the highly sensitive nature of the information concerned, and the need to ensure that Indigenous origin information is managed appropriately and in a manner respectful of the wishes of the communities concerned, MUNCCI removed generic access to indigenous origin information by NCIS users. MUNCCI is continuing to work with SCERH to obtain advice from representatives of indigenous communities and from research organisations on how to assess requests by individual users to indigenous origin information. Version 6 of the application form has been amended to specifically require potential new users to specify why access to indigenous origin information is required.

6. Funding Arrangements

6.1 Core Funding

In March 1999 the NCCCI approved funding for the continued development of the NCIS for a period of three years commencing in 1999/2000. The budget for the NCIS provided for a 50% funding contribution from the Commonwealth with the balance of the funding being shared on a per capita basis by each of the States and Territories. The funding strategy was endorsed by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General in July 1999, on the basis that the NCIS would be self-funding at the end of the three year funding period.

As reported in the preface to the 2001/02 annual report, the NCIS was not fully self-funding at the end of 2001/02. The Commonwealth, States and Territories agreed to an extension of the original three year funding strategy for a further year during 2002/03 to enable resolution of a number of funding issues.

The following table shows the contributions for 2002/2003 pursuant to the 1 year extension of the original funding strategy.

Table 1: Funding of NCIS for 2002/2003

Jurisdiction	<u>2002/2003</u>
Commonwealth	275,000
New South Wales	93,000
Victoria	67,900
Queensland	50,900
South Australia	22,700
Western Australia	26,700
Tasmania	7,000
ACT	4,193
NT	2,443
Total	\$549,836

During 2002/03, MUNCCI submitted a business case to the NCCCI for future NCIS funding. After further discussions, MUNCCI revised the business case to exclude the cost of employing data entry staff in each jurisdiction. In March 2003, MUNCCI was asked to prepare a revised budget for the NCIS by the Commonwealth Users Group. In April 2003, the Commonwealth, State and Territory CEOs agreed that the Victorian Department of Justice undertake a review of the revised budget, evaluate the core funding requirements of the NCIS and make recommendations for consideration of the Justice CEOs about the level and term of funding contributions. In the interim, agreement was sought from the Commonwealth, States and Territories to extend NCIS funding until December 31 2003. MUNCCI understands that there has been in-principle support for this proposal, provided that all jurisdictions agree to the extension at current funding levels.

6.2 Access Fees

As discussed above, the funding strategy for NCIS that was endorsed in 1999 was predicated upon MUNCCI moving from a system of government grants to a fee for service model. The extension of MUNCCI's funding by the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in 2002/03 was provided to enable MUNCCI to revolve a number of issues, including the development of a fee for service model. This was a significant source of activity for MUNCCI during 2002/03.

MUNCCI asked users to advise on their access needs and engaged a cost consultant to advise on the most appropriate model. The NCIS User Pays model is based upon the principle that a portion of every subscription fee should consist of a base subscription amount. This base subscription amount consists of the users contribution towards the core funding of the NCIS, being the general costs involved in the day to day operation and maintenance of the NCIS. The remaining portion of the subscription fee is derived from costs involved in providing the particular subscription service to the user (i.e. the cost to produce data extracts for a CD subscription). The total subscription fee as presented to the user is therefore the combination of the base subscription amount plus the cost of the service provision. As MUNCCI anticipated that Commonwealth and State governments will commit funding to the core running costs of the NCIS in the form of a series of grants, the funding model is based on the assumption that the NCIS will be partially government funded. As a result, government agencies are exempt from paying the base subscription portion of any NCIS subscription fee.

The proposed funding model was adopted by the MUNCCI Board in February 2003. MUNCCI then wrote to all users to advise that an access fee regime would be introduced on 1 July 2003 and to provide information concerning available products and fees, depending upon whether the organisation was government or non-government.

To ensure the value of the NCIS as a death and injury prevention tool was not restricted solely to those agencies with the capacity to pay, MUNCCI undertook to establish a procedure by which individuals and agencies with "exceptional circumstances" can apply to the MUNCCI Board for consideration of a reduced access fee. As this procedure had not been finalised by the scheduled commencement of the access fee regime on 1 July 2003, MUNCCI decided to continue to enable access to the NCIS by agencies who indicated that they did not have the capacity to pay access fees until the finalisation of the 'exceptional circumstances' process.

Copies of the price list for Government and non-Government users are attached at schedule 2.

7. Financial Statements (updated but needs further work)

MUNCCI/NCIS funds are audited as part of the Monash University audited accounts. Funding and expenditure is detailed below.

7.1 Core Funding

Income	\$
Brought forward 2001/02	228,381
Commonwealth, State and Territory contributions	398,278
Other (including money owing)	319,392
Total core income	946,051

Expenditure	
Salary costs	311,509
Operating costs (phone, fax, consumables)	7,271
Software support	10,591
Staff Training/Education	18,227
Consultancies	143,726
Travel	10,945
NCCCI / catering	3,636
VIFM network services (Internet access, IT support)	215,000
Total core expenditure	720,905
BALANCE	225,146

7.2 Drugs Module project

Income	\$
Brought forward 2001/02	145,997
Contributions	
Total income	145,997
Expenditure	
Systems analysis	6,995
Database design	3,980
Project officer	2,988
Administration costs (office supplies, phone etc) – fixed cost	1,037
Total expenditure	15,000
BALANCE	130,997

7.3 National Minimum Dataset Project (including water related deaths)

Income	\$
Contributions	64,000
Total income	64,000
Expenditure	
System analysis and testing	11,760
IT Programming	38,080
Total expenditure	49,840
BALANCE	14,160

Notes: 1. \$9000 of the balance has been set aside for updating the data dictionary, coding manual and search manual. The remaining balance will be used to commence the remainder of the necessary IT programming, including the specific screen design for Victoria.

2. No salary component for the NMDS Project Officer has been incorporated. These salary costs and the salary costs for the Project Manager amount to \$42,600.

7.4 In-kind Support

Again this year a number of agencies have provided in-kind support that does not show up in the income and expenditure statement. In particular, MUNCCI acknowledges the following organisations for their valuable contributions of time and expertise.

Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC)

- Ongoing assistance with refining the NCIS data set; and
- Advice regarding data items for inclusion in MUNCCI's proposed national death investigation form for police investigations of coronial deaths.

National Injury Surveillance Unit (NISU)

- Ongoing assistance with refining the NCIS data set; and
- Advice regarding data items for inclusion in MUNCCI's proposed national death investigation form for police investigations of coronial deaths.

National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC)

- Ongoing assistance with refining the NCIS data set; and
- Ongoing support regarding the coding of NCIS data including occupation and industry at the time of death for work related deaths on the NCIS

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

- Ongoing support regarding the provision of coding and data to supplement the NCIS, including multiple ICD-10 cause of death codes, marital status, indigenous origin and period of residence in Australia.

Schedule 1 - NCCCI Membership

Chair - Professor Dennis Else

Chair, National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC)

ORGANISATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Australian Coroners' Society	Mr Graeme Johnstone State Coroner, Victoria
Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) - Secretariat	Laurie Glanfield Director General NSW Attorney-General's Department
Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) – States/Territories	Ruvani Wickremesinghe Assistant Director, Civil Law Branch/Kristen Murray, Legal Officer Legal Policy and Court Services Victorian Department of Justice
Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) – Commonwealth	Dr Dianne Heriot Assistant Secretary Crime Prevention Branch Criminal Justice Division Attorney-General's Department
Health Departments – States/Territories	Ms Sue Cornes Manager Data Services Unit Health Information Centre Queensland Health
Health Departments - Commonwealth	Dr Wilawan Kanjanapan Assistant Director Information Development Section Population Health Division Department of Health and Ageing
Police – States/Territories	Superintendent Ross Dwyer
Police – Commonwealth	As for SCAG
Occupational Health and Safety Administrators' Group – States/Territories	Michael Little Director, Strategy Health and Safety Business Unit WorkCover, Victoria
Occupational Health and Safety Administrators' Group – Commonwealth	John Rowling Assistant Secretary Safety and Compensation Policy Branch Dept Employment Workplace Relations and Small Business
Work Place Safety - National	Dr Robert Brazenor Epidemiology Team Leader Data Policy & Analysis, NOHSC
Consumer Affairs – State/Territory	Ms Lois Goodes Manager, Policy Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria

ORGANISATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Consumer Affairs - Commonwealth	John Wunsch Manager Safety Policy Unit Consumer Affairs Division Department of Treasury
Registries of Births Deaths and Marriages	Trevor Stacey Registrar NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare	Geoff Sims Head, Health Division Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)
Transport Safety - National	Jon Henchy Team Leader, National Statistical Coordination and Analysis Australian Transport Safety Bureau
Australian Bureau of Statistics	Ron Casey Regional Director Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
National Injury Surveillance Unit	Dr James Harrison Director Research Centre for Injury Studies (RCIS) Flinders University
MUNCCI	Professor Stephen Cordner Director, VIFM/MUNCCI

Schedule 2 - NCIS Fee Schedule

Government Fees

PRODUCT / SERVICE	FEE (incl GST)
ANNUAL ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION	
Online subscription (1 to 3 users)	\$3,300
Online subscription – additional users	\$1,100 per additional user
ANNUAL CD-ROM SUBSCRIPTION	
(a) CD-Rom subscription - fielded data only	\$5,500
(b) CD-Rom subscription - fielded data and full text documents	\$11,000
ADDITIONAL DATA EXTRACTS	
<i>Based on the same criteria as previous extracts</i>	
Fielded data only	\$2,200
Fielded data and full text documents included	\$4,400
<i>Based on new criteria</i>	
Fielded data only	\$3,300
Fielded data and full text documents included	\$6,600
SEARCHES CONDUCTED ON BEHALF OF USERS	
Search of NCIS	\$110 an hour
Supply of documents on the NCIS	\$1.10 per page + hourly rate charge as above

Standard Fees

PRODUCT / SERVICE	FEE (incl GST)
ANNUAL ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION	
Online subscription (1 to 3 users)	\$13,200
Online subscription – additional users	\$1,100 per additional user
ANNUAL CD-ROM SUBSCRIPTION	
(a) CD-Rom subscription - fielded data only	\$15,400
(b) CD-Rom subscription - fielded data and full text documents	\$20,900
ADDITIONAL DATA EXTRACTS	
<i>Based on the same criteria as previous extracts</i>	
Fielded data only	\$2,200
Fielded data and full text documents included	\$4,400
<i>Based on new criteria</i>	
Fielded data only	\$3,300
Fielded data and full text documents included	\$6,600
SEARCHES CONDUCTED ON BEHALF OF USERS	
Search of NCIS - existing subscriber	\$110 an hour
Search of NCIS - non subscriber	\$192.50 an hour
Supply of documents on the NCIS (existing subscribers only)	\$1.10 per page + hourly rate charge as above