



MUNCCI

**Monash University National Centre for
Coronial Information
(MUNCCI)**

developing and managing the

**National Coroners Information System
(NCIS)**

ANNUAL REPORT

1 July 2003 - 30 June 2004

MUNCCI

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1. Preface

I am pleased to present the sixth annual report of the Monash University National Centre for Coronial Information (MUNCCI). This report details activities that have been undertaken by MUNCCI in managing the National Coroners Information System (NCIS) during the period 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004.

I am delighted to say that during 2003/04 the financial position of the NCIS was secured, with the endorsement of the funding model by the relevant agencies in November 2003. This 'in principle' arrangement involves Commonwealth and State/Territory agencies continuing to provide operational funding for the NCIS until June 2006, subject to the adoption of a revised governance structure involving the transfer of NCIS from Monash University to the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM). The continued support and goodwill of these government agencies has been critical in the development and operations of the NCIS in the past, and their agreement to continue to fund the system past June 2003 is a hugely positive step for the future of the system.

The logistics surrounding this management transfer, and the development of a new governance structure has therefore kept the MUNCCI team fairly busy throughout the year. Obtaining agreement from 8 separate State/Territory agencies and the Commonwealth about the new governance structure was a highlight, and it is expected the legal transfer of operations will be finalised in 2004/05.

As the volume of data increases on the NCIS, the ability of the system to contribute towards death and injury prevention is becoming more and more evident. This can be seen by the increasing number of information requests MUNCCI received from coroners in 2003/04, and the fact that third party users were willing to adopt a user pays system for access to the data.

Development of international interest in the system also progressed in 2003/04, with the first international coroner, Mr Chris Dorries from the United Kingdom, receiving access to the system. This access will assist in demonstrating the benefits a system such as the NCIS could have to the UK coronial system, and promote Australia as one of the world leaders in the collection and use of coronial information.

During 2003/04, MUNCCI was sad to see Kristen Murray, Project Manager depart (August 2003), an absence that was keenly felt by the remaining staff. As the Project Manager position was not officially filled until July 2004 due to funding uncertainties, the MUNCCI team did an excellent job in the interim, alongside reduced staffing numbers and uncertainty about the projects future. Thanks should also go to Vicky Winship, who was the Acting Project Manager during this time, and to Jessica Pearse. With the securing of the governmental funding mentioned above, staff enhancements are planned for early 04/05.

The efforts of each of the coronial offices in providing the data for the NCIS during the year should also be acknowledged. Without their hard work and

dedication, the database would not contain the volume of detailed information of improving quality that it does, making it such a valuable tool.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Monash University and the three departments which comprise MUNCCI for all their assistance and support to the NCIS since its inception. With the new governance arrangement, the NCIS moves into a new phase of its development. However the insight and initiative of Monash University in helping to originally finance our development, and the additional in kind support provided via its Legal Office and Ethics Committee, have been invaluable, and without it we simply would not exist. I am sure that the warm relationship between Monash University and the NCIS will continue in the future.

Stephen Cordner, Director MUNCCI; Director Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine; Head of Department of Forensic Medicine, Monash University.

2. Executive Summary

This is the sixth Annual Report of the Monash University National Centre for Coronial Information (MUNCCI). It will also be the last annual report concerning the National Coroners Information System (NCIS) under the MUNCCI name, with management of the NCIS to be transferred from MUNCCI to the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) in 2004/05.

Due to this impending management change the MUNCCI Board was disbanded at the end of 2003/04. This annual report will therefore be provided to the NCIS Committee, a similar governing body under the new NCIS governance structure.

For information concerning the history of MUNCCI and development of the NCIS, please refer to previous annual reports and the Business Plan 1999-2002 (available on our website at <http://www.ncis.org.au>).

2.1 Major Achievements

A large portion of the year's activities surrounded the securing of continued governmental funding for the NCIS, with funding for the NCIS being secured from State and Commonwealth Government agencies until the end of 05/06. This funding was secured contingent on a revised governance structure and the transfer of management of the NCIS from Monash University to the VIFM.

A major achievement during the year was therefore the development and approval of a revised governance structure for the NCIS, along with preparation for the legal transfer of the system. Alongside this work, a number of other positive steps were also made concerning the National Coroners Information System in 2003/04.

These included:

- Implementation of the user pays system;
- Approved NCIS access for an international coroner;
- Provision of Queensland Data to death investigation users and third parties;
- Commencement of regular quality assurance audits and feedback reports to the coronial offices;
- Provision of training sessions for third party users for the identification of fatalities relating to the health sector and drug related fatalities;
- Finalisation of reciprocal permissions concerning increased access for NCIS expert users; and
- Involvement in facilitating a lodged "Issue of Concern" relating to child fatalities associated with blind cord strangulation.

Further details surrounding these achievements are outlined later in this report.

2.2 Review Against Objectives for 2003/2004

A number of objectives for the 2003/04 were outlined and below are those that were undertaken and achieved.

Achieved Objectives

Reviewing governance structures for MUNCCI, being the MUNCCI Board and NCCCI and make modifications where appropriate with approval from relevant authority

- Development of new governance structure.

Continuing to raise national and international profile of the NCIS

- International coroner approved for access.
- Presentation made at TIAFT Conference.

Finalising research policy and undertaking data extraction and analysis service within approved guidelines

- Approval of data extraction/analysis protocol and process at October 2003 MUNCCI Board Meeting.

Continuing to manage the NCIS within budget

- NCIS within budget for 2003/04.

Secure ongoing funding for the NCIS

- Achieved continued governmental funding for 2003/04; 2004/05 and 2005/06 subject to transfer of management of NCIS and intellectual property to a Crown entity.
- Scheduled review of funding situation by NCIS Board of Management every 3 years.

Investigating supplementary income from private industry through possible sponsorship of the NCIS, and/or publication of relevant industry newsletters

- Received approval from all State/Chief Coroners for concept of de-identified industry newsletters to be released to private sector should this avenue be pursued.

Continuing to liaise with jurisdictions to improve case closure and document attachment rates

- Visit to WA Coroners Office conducted.
- Continued distribution of case closure and document attachment statistics.
- Commenced development of automated upload error report.

Continuing to systematically implement NCIS Quality Assurance Plan

- Completion of quality assurance review.
- Implementation of monthly scheduled audits and feedback reports.

Continuing to provide help desk services for contributing jurisdictions and third party users

- Continuation of help desk service by MUNCCI.

Visit Western Australian Coroners Office to provide NCIS expert training and to examine data entry processes and procedures

- Conducted in February 2004.

Completing implementation of NCIS Experts Training Program and provide regular search tips newsletters

- Drugs Search Tips Newsletter produced and distributed.
- Increased access permissions authorised and implemented for NCIS Experts.

Other Objectives

There were a number of objectives outlined for 2003/04 which were unable to be achieved due to uncertainty surrounding the future funding of the NCIS, and the subsequent reduced staffing level over this period. These objectives have therefore either been marked for incorporation into the NCIS Business Plan for 2004-2006, or re-assessed in light of governmental funding requirements. These objectives were:

Developing a business case for 2004-07

- 2004/2006 NCIS Business Plan to be created and approved in 2004.

Continuing discussions with MUARC about potential linkage with the VISAR Injury Database

- Reassessed in light of changes to relationship with Monash University. Possibly to be re-examined at a later stage.

Establishing NCIS user group and investigate potential enhancements to the NCIS such as automatic case notification or portal technology

- NCIS Advisory Group incorporated into new governance structure and the creation of this group to be included in the 2004-2006 NCIS Business Plan.
- Any major potential enhancements to the system to be presented for approval through the NCIS governance structure.

Improving marketing strategy and potential client/user base identification

- Reassessed due to governmental funding constraints for these activities.

Analysing the NCIS in terms of the new privacy legislation and revise privacy protocols and policies if necessary

- Review of Privacy and Legislation environment to be incorporated in Year 2 of NCIS Business Plan.

Streamlining process for obtaining coronial approval to release research reports

- Letter regarding suggesting more streamlined options for to be sent to State/Chief Coroners in 04/05.

Finalising MUNCCI/NCIS Security/Procedures Manual

- Transfer of management of NCIS to VIFM will result in the NCIS adopting VIFM standard security protocols and procedures.

Obtaining full text autopsy reports, toxicology reports and coronial findings for Queensland coronial cases

- To be incorporated into 2004-2006 NCIS Business Plan.

Obtaining South Australian autopsy and toxicology reports from South Australian Forensic Science Centre

- To be incorporated into 2004-2006 NCIS Business Plan.

Continuing work on implementation of the National Police Form

- Investigations to be made into feasibility of automated data extraction from National Police Forms in use in jurisdictions in 2005.

Continuing to liaise with toxicology laboratories to facilitate transfer of toxicology data set to NCIS and investigate funding options to support this process

- Suspension of work on Drugs Module project at the request of Drugs Strategy Unit, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. Awaiting further instructions from this branch.
- Clarification of drugs module project to be incorporated into 2004-2006 NCIS Business Plan.

Including ICD-10 cause of death codes provided by ABS into the NCIS data set

- To be incorporated into 2004-2006 NCIS Business Plan.
- Commenced interface amendments to accommodate this new data.

Developing updates of technical and supporting documentation as required

- Updates of Local Case Management System Manual and Coding Manual scheduled for 2004/05.

Visiting Queensland Coroners Office to provide NCIS expert training and to examine data entry processes and procedures

- Queensland did not nominate any NCIS expert users, preferring to utilise MUNCCI to provide search services for the coronial office.

2.3 Objectives for 2004/2005

The objectives for 2004/05 are available within the NCIS Business Plan 2004 – 2006. They comprise of objectives surrounding 5 major areas of priority:

- Data Quality;
- Data Completeness;
- Coronial Awareness and Usage;
- Stakeholder Relationships and Communication; and
- Administration.

3. MUNCCI Board and Staff

MUNCCI is a research centre of Monash University. It is a consortium of the Department of Forensic Medicine, the Monash Accident Research Centre 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 implementation and operation of the National Coroners Information System;
3. Provide advice and support as 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 Centres budget statements;
6. Receive and approve the Centres annual reports to the University;
7. Ensure the timely and effective completion of the work program of the Centre; and
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 2003/04

The Board met four times during 2003/04, in October, February, May and June.

Associate Professor Ben Canny, Co-Chair, Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH) also joined the MUNCCI Board in 2003/04.

Major issues considered by the Board in 2003/04 included funding uncertainty surrounding the NCIS and ways in which to progress/address this; endorsement of an NCIS data extraction and analysis process for one off information requests; approval of an exceptional circumstances fee relief process for users who believed they were unable to meet the full user fees applicable; and assessment of individual exceptional circumstance applications. Consideration of how to assess applications for exceptional circumstance fee relief from MUNCCI consortium departments was addressed, with a decision made for an independent assessment outside the MUNCCI Board environment to be undertaken to ensure no conflict of interest issues.

Under the new governance structure for the NCIS from 2004/05 onwards, the MUNCCI Board will be replaced with an NCIS Committee, which will consist of representatives from the VIFM, the NCIS, the Australasian Coroners Society, and the Injury Prevention Community. The last formal MUNCCI Board meeting was therefore held in June 2003, with all participants thanked for their extensive support of the system up to this point.

MUNCCI Board membership follows:

Board members:

Chairperson: Professor John McNeil

Members:

Stephen Cordner:	Director VIFM, Director MUNCCI
Prof Olaf Drummer:	Head Scientific Services VIFM
Dr James Harrison:	Director of the Research Centre for Injury Studies
Graeme Johnstone:	State Coroner of Victoria (representing the Australian Coroners' Society)
Kristen Murray/ Vicky Winship:	NCIS Project Manager/Acting Project Manager
Professor Joan Ozanne-Smith	Chair of Injury Prevention, MUARC
Assoc Professor David Ranson	Acting Director, VIFM

3.3 NCIS Project Team

There was one new appointment to the NCIS Team over 2003/04. Tony Chan joined MUNCCI in February 2003 as a Quality Assurance Assistant. This role was created to provide assistance to the Quality Assurance Officer in the review and assessment of data quality of the NCIS.

There were a number of staff departures in 2003/04. Kristen Murray, NCIS Project Manager, who was originally seconded from the Department of Justice into the MUNCCI team in June 2003, left MUNCCI in August 2003 when she resigned from the Department of Justice. Vicky Winship, IT Manager, VIFM was Acting Project Manager until June 2004.

Jessica Pearse, Senior Project Officer, temporarily left the MUNCCI team in August 2003 for an overseas holiday, however returned to MUNCCI in January 2004 to assist with the transfer of the NCIS from Monash University to the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine.

Edward Mulvenna, Administration Officer, completed his work with the MUNCCI team in December 2003.

Sue Wood, Quality Assurance Officer, completed her secondment from the National Centre for Classification in Health in June 2003.

Due to the uncertain financial arrangement of the NCIS throughout 2003/04 permanent replacement of the above MUNCCI staff was postponed while funding negotiations and new governance structures were designed. From July 2004, with greater security surrounding the funding and future operations of the NCIS, replacement staff has been engaged.

MUNCCI

The staff composition during 2003/04 was as follows:

- **Kristen Murray** Project Manager (June 2003 – August 2003)
- **Vicky Winship** Acting Project Manager (September 2003 – June 2004)
- **Jessica Pearse** Senior Project Officer (to August 2003; January 2004 – June 2004)
- **Kerryn Mulvenna** Project Officer (contract work from July 2003 to August 2003)
- **Edward Mulvenna** Administration Officer (to December 2003)
- **Sue Wood** Quality Assurance Officer (to June 2004)
- **Marde Hoy** Project/Applications Officer

- Technical support is also provided by **Jarrod Boxall (Programmer/Data Analyst)** and **Aldo Morales (Programmer)** through VIFM Information Technology. High level IT advice and assistance is also provided by the manager of the IT group.

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 administration of policy arrangements which have been settled in the establishment of MUNCCI.

Due to the negotiations which were underway concerning future funding of the NCIS in 2003/04, there were no meetings held on the NCCCI during this financial year. Membership of the NCCCI therefore did not change in 2003/04 and can be referenced in the MUNCCI Annual Report for 2002/03.

Under the new governance arrangements in 2004/05 onwards, the NCCCI will be replaced by the NCIS Board of Management, which will be comprised of representatives from each of the Commonwealth and State/Territory core funding agencies. An advisory group of NCIS users and interested parties will be created to allow for the continued input of some NCCCI members should they wish to provide feedback towards the system.

Correspondence to each of the NCCCI members was sent detailing these changes and thanking them for their contribution to the system in June 2004.

5. MUNCCI Activities

The majority of activities during 2003/04 were more of a policy and procedural nature than concerning technical enhancements. As such there were no significant technical developments of the NCIS during 2003/04.

5.1 Funding and Governance Developments

Government funding for the NCIS past June 2003 was endorsed in 2003/04 by the relevant Commonwealth agencies and State/Territory Justice Chief Executive Officers subject to a number of conditions being met in relation to the governance of the NCIS. These conditions involved the development of revised governance arrangement and transfer of the NCIS to the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM).

To progress this restructure of the governance of the NCIS and the legal transfer of the system to the VIFM, the following was achieved in 2003/04:

- Development of a revised governance structure for the NCIS which involves the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) assuming responsibility for management of the NCIS, and incorporates a NCIS Board of Management comprised of representatives from each of the funding agencies;
- Approval of the revised governance structure by the relevant Commonwealth agencies and State/Territory Justice Chief Executive Officers;
- Agreement from Monash University to transfer NCIS operations to the VIFM;
- Preparation of documentation concerning the legal transfer of the NCIS from Monash University to the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine; and
- Investigation of the most appropriate Ethics Committee to assess NCIS third party applications in light of the revised governance arrangements.

The transfer of the NCIS to the VIFM is expected to be completed by the end of 2004/early 2005.

5.2 Implementation of the User Pays System

During 2003/2004 the user pays system for third party users of the NCIS was implemented. This system was designed to ensure that costs associated with the provision of access to the NCIS by third party users and extraction of information for data requests were recouped.

Correspondence indicating the rationale behind the fee for service model, the various product/service options available and the relevant pricing structures were sent to users in early 2003. The approved fee schedule is outlined in Schedule 1.

An exceptional circumstance process to cater for third party users who believed they were unable to pay the full fee for access to the NCIS was developed and implemented, with users completing a designated application form and providing

supporting documentation for their case which was subsequently considered by the MUNCCI Board.

Table 1 provides a summary of details surrounding the user pays system in 2003/04.

Table 1. Summary Table of User Pays System in 2003/04

2003/04	Number of Organisations
Invoiced Under User Pays System*	30
Products Purchased	
Online Subscription	19
Data Extract	4
Information Search	10
Total Products Purchased	33

Table 2. Summary Table of Exceptional Circumstances Applications

2003/04	Number of Exceptional Circumstances
Exceptional Circumstance Application Granted	9
Exceptional Circumstance Application Refused	2
Total Applications for Fee Relief	11

**Certain third party users were not invoiced under the user pays system in 2003/04 due to their status as core funding agencies or due to pending applications for exceptional circumstances fee relief.*

*** Several organisations purchased more than one product/service during the year.*

As can be seen from Table 1, during the first year of operation, thirty (30) organisations purchased a service or product from MUNCCI. Nineteen (19) online subscriptions, four (4) data extracts and ten (10) information searches were provided under the user pays system in 2003/04. Please see Schedule 2 for a list of those relevant organisations.

As can be seen from Table 2, eleven (11) exceptional circumstance applications were received and considered by the MUNCCI Board in 2003/04, with all of those applications pertaining to online subscription access and being received from non-government organisations.

Nine (9) of these applications (or just over 80%) had some degree of fee reduction approved by the MUNCCI Board. Of the 9 applications for exceptional circumstance approved, two (2) organisations had full fee relief granted, while seven (7) had partial relief granted, being a fee reduction to the government rate.

The User Pays system will be reviewed in 04/05 in terms of appropriate fee structures and products/services offered.

Please refer to financial section of the Annual Report for details concerning income received from the user pays system in 2003/04.

5.3 Quality Assurance Activities

To ensure accuracy, consistency, reliability and completeness of data, a review of NCIS coded data was undertaken by MUNCCI Quality Assurance staff during 2003/04. This review involved assessing all coronial cases stored on the NCIS with a closed status as at 31 December 2002. A report titled "The Quality of NCIS Coded Data" was produced in November 2003 as a result of this review.

The audit reviewed just over 28,000 coronial cases and completion or corrective action was taken on almost 16,000 of these cases, representing 57% of cases.

A continuous quality assurance review program has commenced from November 2003, in which cases closed within the preceding month are reviewed by MUNCCI Quality Assurance staff. To ensure continuous improvement in coding, quality reports arising from these regular reviews are fed back to the individual coronial offices, indicating those cases where modification or amendment is required, along with guidelines as to what remedies are required for each case. This feedback process, in conjunction with a continuous coder and training education program and revision of coding reference materials, should hopefully result in improved coding accuracy for the NCIS.

It would appear that this feedback process has contributed towards improved coding of the NCIS, with most coronial offices experiencing a substantial reduction in identified quality issues since the November 2003 quality reviews commenced. An overall 8% improvement in coding quality occurred between the first November 2003 quality report and the February 2004 report.

A 2 day coder training session was also held in January 2003 for Queensland coders. The provision of regular coder training sessions will be one of the priorities for 2004/2005.

5.4 NCIS Access Approved for International Coroner

National approval from all Australian State and Chief Coroners was received in 2003/04 to permit online access to the NCIS by Chris Dorries, a coroner presiding over the jurisdiction of Sheffield in the United Kingdom.

Coroner Dorries was approved for access to NCIS case information for a 12 month period until June 2005 for the purposes of assisting him in his daily work as a coroner, and so as also to be able to demonstrate the system and its benefits to the Home Office.

This request for access was a result of a visit and demonstration of the system conducted for Coroner Dorries on a visit to Australia during 2003/04, and follows on from the two English reports released in 2002/03 which mentioned the NCIS and its value as a system in death and injury prevention.

5.5 Third Party User Training Sessions

To enable third party users to obtain the maximum value from the NCIS, particularly with the introduction of a user pays system, two training workshops were conducted in 2003/04 to demonstrate NCIS searching methods concerning areas of interest common to a range of third party users.

These sessions conducted in May 2004 with a session held on 18 May in Sydney which concentrated on how to search for fatalities of interest to the health sector, while the session on the 27th May in Melbourne focused on how to use the NCIS to search for drug related fatalities.

Participants from the following third party user organisations attended the sessions:

May 18 2004 – Fatalities concerning the health sector

- NSW Health – Injury Prevention Unit, Population Health, Centre for Mental Health, Epidemiology
- NSW Institute of Trauma and Injury Management
- NSW Commission for Children and Young People
- Northern Sydney Health
- NSW Institute of Injury and Risk Management
- ACT Health

May 27 – Drug Related Fatalities

- National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
- Victorian Department of Human Services
- Turning Point
- ACT Health – Alcohol and Drugs Policy Unit

5.6 Access to Queensland Data

On the 23rd June 2003, the Queensland Licence Agreement between the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and Monash University was signed, which authorised NCIS to release Queensland coronial information to NCIS users. Since the signing of the agreement:

- 15 third party organisations (comprising 40 users) now have access to Queensland data. Other organisations are either in the process of submitting a request for access, or do not require access to Queensland data for the purposes of their project; and
- All death investigators who use the NCIS for information retrieval purposes now have access to Queensland data.

5.7 Completion of Authorisations for NCIS Experts Program

To enhance the ability of coronial staff to assist coroners in performing searches of the NCIS, increased NCIS access permissions for certain nominated staff members were sought from State/Territory Coroners in 2002/03.

During 2003/04, finalisation of these reciprocal NCIS permissions were received from Queensland and Western Australia, which means nominated coronial staff are now able to conduct searches on the NCIS and identify the same cases that a coroner would if they were conducting the search themselves.

5.8 Use of the NCIS by Coroners and Death Investigators

At the end of 2003/04 there were 207 death investigators registered on the system.

An increasing number of requests were received by MUNCCI from coroners or death investigators requesting searches be performed on the system to identify the frequency and circumstances surrounding a certain number of instances.

As a representative sample, in the 2 months from the 30 April to 30 June 2004, twelve* (12) separate requests were made to MUNCCI.

These requests encompassed:

- Deaths associated with motor racing events;
- Falls where the deceased fell through roof sheeting/skylights;
- Natural deaths associated with coronary artery dissection;
- Suicide deaths involving firearms in Victoria in 2002 and 2003;
- Deaths which resulted from an overloading of vehicles;
- Child falls from tractors, utes and trailers other towed equipment;
- Deaths associated with the jacking up of a vehicle;
- Unintentional deaths involving yachts;
- Maternal related fatalities;
- Deaths associated with the drug naltrexone;
- Deaths associated with the drug “crystal meth”; and
- Deaths associated with non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH).

Information sourced from the NCIS has also been referenced in at least two (2) coronial findings prior to 2003/04. In 2003/2004, a least one other finding made reference to NCIS material.

**It should be noted that this figure does not include searches independently conducted by death investigators, or by coronial staff in the jurisdictions on their behalf using the NCIS and only includes searches performed by MUNCCI staff for death investigators.*

5.9 Third Party Usage of the NCIS

It was encouraging to see that despite the introduction of a user pays system in 2003/04, third party users continued to apply and renew applications for their use of the system.

- Ten (10) new third party applications were received during the 2003/04 year
- Thirteen (13) third party organisations renewed or extended their NCIS access agreements.

As at 30 June 2004 there were 40 third party organisations accessing the system, equating to 123 individual users.

Note: The term “third party organisation” encompasses the entity that has made the application to access the NCIS for a particular purpose. It includes non-profit agencies, government departments, universities, hospitals, and individual researchers with a bone-fide interest in death and injury prevention activities.

5.10 Access Regime

In August 2003, an amendment was made to the MUNCCI Application Form, which is considered by the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH) updating it from version 6 to version 7. The amendment involved a direction to applicants that they must complete Question 13 of the SCERH Application Form – Part A (dealing with privacy issues).

Indigenous information

During 2003/04, further liaison was undertaken with regards to the issue associated with the release of indigenous origin data.

SCERH made contact with the National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data (NAGATSIHID) who indicated that the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) should be contacted with regards to this issue.

SCERH and MUNCCI have been in contact with NACCHO, with an arrangement to be confirmed which will hopefully see NACCHO be the contact point for MUNCCI to refer third party applications which request access to indigenous data. Under the terms of this proposed arrangement, NACCHO would refer the applications to the Coalition of Aboriginal Health Ethics Committees (CAHEC) for their consideration of the ethical issues associated with the indigenous information.

5.11 Issue of Concern – Child Strangulation Associated with Blind/Curtain Cords

In 2003/04 an issue of concern was formally lodged with MUNCCI, in accordance with the relevant clause 13.1 of the Access Agreement entered into by MUNCCI and authorised third party users. This clause indicates that users must immediately notify MUNCCI if any issue of concern to public health and safety (IOCPHS) is identified in the course of reviewing or analysing data for the NCIS.

On July 2003, MUNCCI received an IOCPHS from Associate Professor James Harrison, Research Centre for Injury Studies. Associate Professor Harrison reported that a search of the NCIS and South Australian coronial findings revealed that at least four children between aged between 1 and 2 years of age died in Australia as a result of strangulation by blind or curtain cords.

MUNCCI contacted each of the State/Territory Coroners making them aware of this issue as outlined in the reporting guidelines.

It is of interest to note that the Australian Government Consumer Safety Unit and the Department of Health have since published a Safety Alert brochure regarding Blind & Curtain Cords.

5.12 National Police Death Investigation Form

Since the completion of the Victorian Pilot in May 2003, MUNCCI has kept a keen interest in the progress towards implementation of the national police form in the various jurisdictions. MUNCCI is no longer managing this particular project, having completed its contractual agreement with the Department of Health and Ageing to create and pilot the national form. It is now up to individual States/Territories to decide if and how they wish to implement the national form. MUNCCI however has been on hand throughout the year to provide advice and share information with relevant jurisdictions that have expressed interest in implementing the form.

Jurisdictional Status

Victoria – In response to feedback from the pilot held in 2003, modifications have been made to the electronic version of the Victorian form, to ensure only relevant sections of the form will be displayed on the screen, reducing the size and complexity of the forms appearance. It is expected that once Victoria Police have upgraded their software to OfficeXP, a recommendation will be made by the Victorian Police member which co-ordinated the pilot that the interactive version of the form be implemented statewide.

ACT – As far as MUNCCI is aware, ACT have developed their own electronic version of the national form. It is believed to contain all the standard national data fields, and also has a similar selective section display, however in a slightly different manner to the Victorian version. Indications from the ACT Coroner's Office indicate this electronic version of the form is now in use by ACT Police.

Queensland – Queensland implemented a version of the national form from 1 December 2003 that can be completed electronically.

Northern Territory – A manual version of the national form has apparently been implemented, however fields are been divided across several various different forms, with a "core" reporting form, and other additional forms available for certain types of death. An electronic form is in the final stages of being amended so it can be placed on the police computer system.

New South Wales – NSW had been waiting on the results of the pilot in Victoria, and were then to investigate implementation of the form. Recent efforts have been made the Injury Prevention and Policy Branch of NSW Health to progress the consideration of piloting the form in NSW, and a paper outlining the benefits of such a proposal has been prepared by this Branch.

South Australia – Progression toward use of an electronic police form progressed in 2003/04. *Note: an electronic version of the national police form was implemented in mid October 2004.*

Tasmania – Indications were received in May 2004 that the implementation of the national form had been approved by Tasmanian Police and trials using the static version are currently underway, before commencing with implementation of the fully integrated version. *Note: an electronic version of the national police form was implemented in September 2004.*

Western Australia – The State Coroner was awaiting the results of the pilot in Victoria before determining whether he would recommend the implementation of the national police form to the WA Police Commissioner.

5.13 Drugs Module

In the 2002/03 annual report, it was documented that \$130,997 of funds were unexpended in relation to the drugs module project. This unexpended amount is due to some of the final deliverables in respect to implementation, not being able to be completed in previous years due to a range of issues which included unforeseen technical difficulties in the transfer of toxicological information from the toxicological laboratory systems, lack of funds to overcome these problems and high level costings to standardise toxicological testing around Australia.

As the terms of initial contract for the Drugs Module Project has now expired, in June 2004 MUNCCI wrote to the Drug Strategy Branch of the Australian Department of Health and Ageing, concerning these unexpended monies and requesting further advice as how to proceed with these funds. MUNCCI is awaiting a response from the Drug Strategy Branch in this regard before any further work is undertaken on this project.

5.14 Development of NCIS Case Management Program

During 2003/04, a group of IT undergraduate students from Monash University commenced their final year industry based project at MUNCCI. The students are developing an Office Management Software Application for MUNCCI which will enable more efficient data management surrounding third party access agreements and the associated ethics progresses, management of details surrounding the user pays system and records relating to external information requests.

5.15 Conference Attendance

In November 2003, Vicky Winship, Acting Manager of MUNCCI delivered a presentation at The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT) 41st International Meeting about the National Coroners Information System.

5.16 Visit to the Western Australian Coroner's Office

In February 2004, a visit to the Western Australian Coroner's Office was made by the MUNCCI Senior Project Officer to document the current practices surrounding NCIS data entry in the office, and provide training for coronial staff and coroners on how to search the NCIS.

5.17 Health Information Management Students

MUNCCI was fortunate to be selected by LaTrobe University to have several 3rd Year Health Information Management Students conduct course placements with us over 2003/04. Lara Finlayson and Emma Beattie were both with MUNCCI for 6 weeks and Sophie Karavaros was with us for 5 weeks.

The Health Information Students were involved in small quality assurance programs during their placement, as well as assisting with the interrogation of the NCIS in response to data requests from users.

6. Funding Arrangements

6.1 Government Funding

The development of the National Coroners Information System was originally funded for a period of three years, commencing in 1999/2000, with the understanding that the NCIS would be self funding at the end of the three year period.

At the end of 2001/02, the NCIS was not fully self-funded and the Commonwealth, State and Territory funding agencies 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 data quality issues and the development of a user pays system.

During 2002/03, it was recognised by MUNCCI that despite a user pays system being developed, the NCIS would be unable to be fully self funding and accordingly submitted a business case to the NCCCI for future NCIS funding. In April 2003, the Victorian Department of Justice undertook a review of the NCIS on behalf of the Commonwealth, States and Territory funders to evaluate core funding requirements and made recommendations as to level and term of future funding contributions.

In the interim, agreement was obtained to fund the NCIS during 2003/04 in two six month blocks. Contributions for the six months to 31 December 2003 was to be at the current funding rate, while the six months to 30 June 2004 was to be at a new agreed rate.

In line with these funding arrangements, the table below indicates the contributions that were agreed to be made by core funders in 2003/04.

Table 2. Government contributions to be made in 2003/04

Agency	2003/04
Commonwealth*	\$309,900
Victoria**	\$76,621
New South Wales	\$104,843
Queensland	\$57,401
South Australia	\$24,537
Western Australia	\$30,037
Tasmania	\$7,941
ACT	\$5,186
NT	\$3,033
Total	\$ 619, 499

Please Note

* \$219,900 of the anticipated \$309,900 from the Commonwealth was not received in 2003/04. This amount was to be contributed by Department of Health and Ageing. As it was not received it could not be included in the 2003/04 financial statements.

**The Victorian Department of Justice contribution for 03/04 was received in 04/05 and as such is not included in the 2003/04 financial statements, however will be included in the 04/05 financial statements.

7. Financial Statements

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

7.1 General NCIS Income/Expenditure Statement

	\$
Balance brought forward 2002/03	225,146
Income Received	
Core Funding Agency Contributions*	322,980
User Pays System	81,860
Other contributions	
Case mgmt system maintenance	800
Miscellaneous funding contributions	29,000
Total Income Received	659,786
Expenses	
Employee entitlements	190,129
General Expenses	-
Travel, entertainment & personal expenses	6,542
Printing, stationary and other office expenses	7,235
Contractors and consultants	49,710
Staff training/development	1,809
IT/Infrastructure costs	244,800
Depreciation	604
Total Expenses	500,829
Net surplus/(Deficit)	158,957

* Note: \$296,521 of the total core government funding contributions of \$619,499 expected as outlined in Table 2 were not received in 2003/04. This included \$76,621 by Victoria, which was received in 04/05, and \$219,900 from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

7.2 Drugs Module Project

Income	\$
Brought forward 2002/03	130,997
Expenses	Nil
Balance	130, 997

7.3 National Minimum Dataset Project (including water related deaths)

Income	\$
Brought forward 2002/03	14,160
Expenses	Nil
Balance	14,160

7.4 In-kind Support

A number of agencies during 2003/04 provided in-kind support to keep the operations of the NCIS and MUNCCI running. These included:

Monash University

***Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC)
Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine
Department of Forensic Medicine***

Participation in MUNCCI Board.
Discussions regarding legal transfer of operation of NCIS to VIFM.

Monash Solicitors Office

Provision of legal services relating to third party access agreements.

Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH)

Provision of ethics committee services for third party applications.

National Injury Surveillance Unit (NISU)

Participation in MUNCCI Board.

Victorian Department of Justice

Provision of assistance with funding and governance proposal documentation.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

Ongoing support regarding the provision of additional coding to supplement NCIS data set.

Schedule 1 – 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

Schedule 2 – Organisations Charged Under User Pays System in 2003/04

Table 1. List of Approved third party organisations invoiced under the user pays system

Organisation	Products/Services Purchased
Victoria	
Worksafe	Online subscription
Department of Infrastructure	Online subscription
Victorian Police - Drug Strategy Unit	Online subscription
Traffic Accident Commission	Online subscription
Department of Human Services	Online subscription, information search
Vicroads	Online subscription
New South Wales	
NSW Waterways	Online subscription
NSW Fire Brigade	Online subscription
NSW Department of Health (Epidemiology)	Online subscription, data extract
NSW Department of Health (Trauma and Injury Management)	Online subscription
Northern Sydney Health	Online subscription, data extract
NSW Office for Children and Young People	Online subscription
Queensland	
Department of Tourism and Fair Trading	Online subscription
Department of Industrial Relations	Online subscription
Queensland Transport	Online subscription
South Australia	
Drug and Alcohol Services Council	Online subscription
ACT	
Workcover	Online subscription
Department of Health and Housing – Drug and Alcohol Policy Unit	Online subscription
Department of Health and Housing – Office of the Chief Health Information Officer	Online subscription
Commonwealth	
ATSB	Data extract

Table 2. List of organisations not authorised for direct access to the NCIS invoiced under the user pays system.

Organisation	Products/Services Purchased
Victoria	
Sunday Herald Sun	Information search
City of Bayside	Information search
Crime Prevention Victoria	Information search
Consumer Affairs Victoria	Information search
New South Wales	
Workcover	Data extract
Office of Fair Trading	Information search
Sydney Morning Herald	Information search
ACT	
Australian Nursing Federation	Information search
The Australian	Information search
Unspecified organisation	Information search