



NCIS News



Edition 6 - Summer 2008

The NCIS Project Team

The IT Division

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The NCIS is managed by the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine on behalf of the State/Federal funding agencies. The NCIS is funded by each State/Territory Justice Department around Australia, and the Australian Departments of Health & Ageing and Employment & Workplace Relations, the ACCC, the ATSB and the AIC.

Staff News

November and December saw several changes to the NCIS staff. Stephen Morton as temporarily left the NCIS Team to take up a 10 month secondment at the Department of Planning and Community Development. Helen Messinis has subsequently joined the NCIS Team as Administration Officer.

Helen commenced in November 2007, and comes to us from the Police Appeals Board where she supported the Board with administrative functions. Prior to this, she spent two years living in and travelling Europe.



Helen is commencing a degree in Criminal Justice in 2008, and has previously completed Certificate IV in Forensic Science.

Anne McKenzie is returning to NCIS from maternity leave in January, and will be working 2 days per week. Anne will be involved in data and communication activities such as production of topic specific fact sheets; geo-coding data and other mortality publications. Lisa Crockett will continue full time in the Coronial Liaison Officer role until the end of June 2008.

Vicki King joined the NCIS Team in January for a 3 month assignment. She will primarily be assisting with the attachment of NSW Police Narratives to the NCIS database. Vicki has recently moved to Australia from England with her husband and two young children.

Fatal Road Crash Database

Coding of detailed information on the Fatal Road Crash Database about all national road fatalities is continuing with coding for 2005 cases almost complete. It is expected that by the end of February external parties will be able to apply to access information from this collection. We will advise all NCIS users of the availability of this new data set once access protocols are finalised.

Adam Wallace, Senior Coder on the Fatal Road Crash Database has decided to pursue his burgeoning career as a children's book author, so will be leaving the project in January.



Adam has been coding data onto the Fatal Road Crash Database for over 10 years (when managed by ATSB) and his experience and familiarity with the unique classification system used on the database will be missed. Bronwyn has been appointed to the Senior Coder Role with another coder to be appointed shortly.

Increase in Mortality Publications

After endorsement by the NCIS Board of Management the NCIS Unit will be involved in more active production of publications about coronial fatalities.

This will include an annual mortality report (overview of types of deaths reported to coroners across Australia during 2005/06) and up to eight Fact Sheets on particular topics of interest

The first Fact Sheet will be about the prevalence of the term 'obesity' in the medical cause of death of persons reported to a coroner.

If there is a topic that you would be interested to see covered by a Fact Sheet, then please let us know by contacting Anne McKenzie on annem@vifm.org.

World Injury Prevention Conference: Mexico 2008

A joint paper submitted by NCIS and Statistics Canada titled "*National Coronial Data Systems: Building capacity for evidence based injury prevention and international collaboration*" has been accepted for an oral presentation at the 9th World Injury Prevention Conference in Merida, Mexico in March 2008. Jessica will be attending the conference to present this paper, and looks forward to seeing any other NCIS users who will be attending the conference.

Fatal Facts

Edition 14 of Fatal Facts has been published since NCIS News was last distributed. It can be viewed by visiting the NCIS website (www.ncis@vifm.org) or by contacting Administration Officer Helen Messinis.

This edition features a case study on product related deaths. Edition 15 of Fatal Facts is due out in late February.

Visit to Canada

Jessica visited Canada during November 2007, and while there met with Statistics Canada and attended the Canadian Injury Prevention Conference. The conference showcased recent research in injury prevention in Canada, and it was of interest to note that many of the same issues that are problematic in Australia (ATV deaths; agricultural and rural safety; suicide and indigenous health) were also highlighted as continuing concerns in Canada.

The visit to Statistics Canada proved particularly informative, as this agency is responsible for implementation of a national coroners/medical examiner database (CCMED) in Canada.

Several commonalities in data coding practices between the Australian and Canadian system were noted, and we look forward to continuing to develop the relationship between these two countries in relation to the very similar data collections.

Addition of NSW toxicology reports

It has taken a long while, but we have finally obtained NSW toxicology reports for the NCIS! A little over 8,000 retrospective toxicology reports have been obtained from the NSW Division of Analytical Laboratories (DAL) and uploaded to the NCIS—the majority of these reports relate to cases between 2004 and 2007.

It is expected that regular uploads of reports pertaining to current cases will now commence. Most of the retrospective reports uploaded relate to cases from 2004 onwards.

Thanks to DAL for their assistance in making this possible, and we hope that the addition of these reports enhances the information available on the NCIS.

Quality Assurance Update

Regular Quality Assurance Activities recommenced in December 2007 after being suspended during the implementation of the new Codeset upgrade. During this time the Quality Team focused on the implementation of the codesets and the mapping of existing cases to the new codesets.

In total over 49,000 existing cases were reviewed by the NCIS Quality Assurance (QA) Team. This translated to 89,994 individual codes being mapped from 'Other Specified' free text fields to new, more specific codes.

QA Reports will be distributed to jurisdictions as soon as possible with QA review currently being conducted on cases closed during April 2007.

Noticed a QA/Coding problem?

We are happy to receive any feedback from NCIS Users with respect of cases they feel have an incorrect code.

Despite our best efforts to ensure that the NCIS coding is correct, the occasional case will slip through our QA net. If you think that you have located a case that requires further attention, please let us know so that we can continue to provide reliable and accurate data.

Please note: Cases that have a status of 'open' will not yet have gone through the QA process. Cases pre March 2004 have not yet been subject to the current rigorous QA process so may show a higher prevalence of possible coding issues. Feedback regarding coding can be forwarded to ncis@vifm.org.

Case Closure and Document Attachment Update

- **Case closure**

The case closure rates (Table 1) indicate that 82% of cases on the NCIS are closed. TAS, SA and the ACT have case closure rates of 90% or more. All States/Territories have a case closure rate of more than 60%.

Table 1 - Case closure

State/Territory	% Closed
ACT	90%
NSW	71%
NT	87%
QLD	62%
SA	94%
TAS	90%
VIC	84%
WA	79%
Total	82%

- **Document attachment rates**

Victoria remains the State with the highest document attachment rate (Table 2, pg 5).

There continues to be a steady increase in attachment rates for all jurisdictions.

The most pleasing result has been the new addition of NSW Toxicology reports to NCIS, bringing the percentage of NSW cases with a toxicology report attached from 0% to 43%. Police narratives continue to be the most consistently attached document to NCIS cases, ranging from 54% attachment in NSW to above 95% in most other jurisdictions. and 99% of cases with a police narrative attached.

NCIS is also continuing to liaise with QLD and SA regarding obtaining autopsy and toxicology reports for these jurisdictions.

As noted earlier in this edition, NCIS is currently manually scanning and attaching a selection of police narratives for NSW cases—until the implementation of an electronic police form report.

Table 2 - Document attachment

State/Territory	Autopsy	Finding	Toxicology	Police Narrative
ACT	92%	88%	65%	98%
NSW	79%	55%	43%	54%
NT	93%	91%	58%	97%
QLD	0%	9%	0%	68%
SA	1%	32%	18%	99%
TAS	64%	82%	89%	99%
VIC	92%	98%	98%	96%
WA	32%	90%	66%	95%



NCIS

Comments and Suggestions

We welcome your input!

If you have any comments or suggestions for the content of NCIS News, please contact Helen Messinis on (03) 9684 4442 or at hmessinis@vifm.org.

The next edition of NCIS News is scheduled for release in mid 2008.