

# NCIS News



Edition 9 - Winter 2011

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Staff News ..... 2**

**Review of Governance ..... 3**

**System News ..... 3**

- V. 5.1 & 5.2 NCIS Interface Release

- NCIS User Audit

- New Zealand Data

- NCIS Website Re-design

- Response to Recommendations fields

**Upcoming Events ..... 4**

- 2011 AMDIG Workshop

- 2011 Injury Prevention Conference

- 2011 Coroners Conference

**Recent Publications .....5**

**Data Quality Activities ..... 5**

**User Survey Results .....5**

**Case Closure & Document Attachment Update ..... 6**

**NCIS Search Tips ..... 7**

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, SafeWork Australia, the ACCC, the Australian Department of Infrastructure and the Australian Institute of Criminology.

## The NCIS Team

**Jessica Pearse**

Manager  
(03) 9684 4414

[jessica.pearse@vifm.org](mailto:jessica.pearse@vifm.org)

**Leanne Daking**

Quality Manager  
(03) 9684 4458

[leanne.daking@vifm.org](mailto:leanne.daking@vifm.org)

**Jill Russell**

Quality Assistant  
(03) 9252 1541

[jill.russell@vifm.org](mailto:jill.russell@vifm.org)

**Lisa Crockett**

Coronial Liaison Officer  
(03) 9684 4485

[lisa.crockett@vifm.org](mailto:lisa.crockett@vifm.org)

**Jo Cotsonis**

Access Officer  
(03) 9684 4323

[joanna.cotsonis@vifm.org](mailto:joanna.cotsonis@vifm.org)

**Tony Chan**

QA/IT Officer  
(03) 9684 4321

[tony.chan@vifm.org](mailto:tony.chan@vifm.org)

**Steven Haas**

Research Officer  
(03) 9252 1539

[steven.haas@vifm.org](mailto:steven.haas@vifm.org)

**Andrea Gallo**

Admin Officer  
(03) 9684 4442

[andrea.gallo@vifm.org](mailto:andrea.gallo@vifm.org)

## Fatal Road Crash Database

**Bronwyn Hewitt**

Senior Coder  
(03) 9684 1541

[bronwynh@vifm.org](mailto:bronwynh@vifm.org)

**Tracey Caulfield**

Coder  
(03) 9252 1542

[tracey.caulfield@vifm.org](mailto:tracey.caulfield@vifm.org)

**Jennifer To**

QA Officer  
(03) 9684 1541

[jennifer.to@vifm.org](mailto:jennifer.to@vifm.org)

## IT Support

**Murray Hall**

Mgr, VIFM IT  
(03) 9684 4445

[murrayh@vifm.org](mailto:murrayh@vifm.org)

**Jarrod Boxall**

Service Level Mgr  
(03) 9684 4441

[jarrodb@vifm.org](mailto:jarrodb@vifm.org)

## General Contact Details

Helpdesk Phone  
(03) 9684 4442

Fax  
(03) 9682 7353

Web

[www.ncis.org.au](http://www.ncis.org.au)

email

[ncis@vifm.org](mailto:ncis@vifm.org)

**Welcome to the latest edition of NCIS News. Since our last edition there have been several changes to the NCIS Team, two new releases of the NCIS search interface, a review of the NCIS governance and a user survey. Some useful tips for users when searching the NCIS are also included in this edition.**

## Staff News

In December 2010 we bid farewell to Marde Hoy who has taken up residence in the UK; subsequently, Jo Cotsonis has been permanently appointed to the NCIS Access Officer role. We have welcomed Tracey Caulfield as FRCD Coder, Jill Russell as NCIS Quality Assistant and Jennifer To as FRCD QA Officer. In June 2011, Catherine Daley started her maternity leave, with a replacement admin officer, Andrea Gallo, joining the team while Catherine is on leave.

### ***Tracey Caulfield—Fatal Road Crash Database Coder***

Tracey started with NCIS in August 2010 as one of the two Fatal Road Crash Database Coders. Tracey has previously worked in numerous University libraries as a book librarian, medical book cataloguer and biomedical subject librarian. She has also worked as a research assistant in the English Department at Monash University. Tracey served three years as a lay member on the Alfred Hospital Human Research Ethics Committee and the General Ethical Issues Sub-Committee. In 2008 she completed a PhD in the English Department at Monash University writing a descriptive bibliography and publishing history of the Australian writer Henry Handel Richardson. Tracey's passions in life are tea and travel, and she loves to combine the two and has visited tea estates in India, Sri Lanka, Japan, Malaysia and China, and has even curated an exhibition and symposium on tea at the University of Melbourne. Tracey is originally from Hobart and loves to visit family and friends in Tasmania as often as possible.

### ***Jill Russell—Quality Assistant***

Jill joined NCIS in November 2010 after spending 18 months as an NCIS coding officer at the Coroners Court of Victoria. Prior to this, Jill worked in Medical administration roles at the Alfred & Royal Children's Hospitals and ARL Pathology, along with a long stint at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. Jill's current hobby is gardening.

### ***Jennifer To—Fatal Road Crash Database QA Officer***

Jennifer conducted a placement with us as part of her degree in Health Information Management in early 2011, and has subsequently joined the NCIS Unit one day a week to perform Quality Assurance checks on the coding performed for the Fatal Road Crash Database. Jennifer is currently completing the final year of her studies.

### ***Andrea Gallo—Administrative Officer***

Andrea is the new Admin Officer while Catherine is on maternity leave. Previously, she worked for the Department of Primary Industries and private companies. Andrea's passions are Latin American literature and watercolour painting.

### ***Student Placements***

Since the last edition of NCIS News, we have hosted 5 students completing the Health Information Management course at Latrobe University. These students have worked on a variety of projects during their placements which included:

- Identification and coding of cases for the implementation of the Multiple Fatality Event feature
- Remapping of cases to reflect recently implemented codes
- Work Related Death coding review
- Assistance with data validation project between NCIS and AIC database
- Revision of pedestrian fatalities to identify any involvement of distraction.

## Review of Governance

In December 2010, the NCIS Board of Management commissioned a review of the governance of the NCIS. The review aims to examine the NCIS's governance and strategic direction, with a report from the review to be considered by the Board in July 2011. This review should also clarify protocols surrounding data supply and custodianship.

The outcomes from this review should ensure all stakeholders have a clearer understanding of the role, purpose and strategic direction of the NCIS as well as ensuring the best governance arrangements are in place to support these goals.

## System News

### ***New Versions of NCIS Interface Released (5.1 & 5.2)***

Several versions of the NCIS web interface have been released (version 5.1 in October 2010 and version 5.2 in April 2011) which contained a variety of new features.

Users can now perform a keyword search across all document types simultaneously using the Coroners Search Screen or the Query Design Screen. Users can now search by the court investigating the case (using Query Design), or by date of birth (via the Find Case Screen). Other features includes:

- A 'Case of Interest' flag which enables users to select cases they would like to easily refer to again later.
- A reorganised 'Finish' screen design, with the ability to select all fields within a particular grouping, to simplify the selection of related fields.
- Ability to audit usage of NCIS (see *NCIS User Audit*)

We look forward to getting your feedback about these new versions, and hope it enhances your experience in using the NCIS. For further

information regarding new features of the NCIS, please contact Lisa Crockett, Coronial Liaison Officer.

### ***NCIS User Audit***

A notable feature of the latest version of the web interface is the ability for the NCIS Unit to audit users access. As a result, the NCIS Unit has commenced a quarterly audit of system use by randomly selecting NCIS Users and review which searches and cases have been accessed by each user. This audit ensures that the types of cases accessed and searches conducted are in line with the approved purposes for that user. Should there be any results from the audit which require further investigation, the NCIS Unit will contact the user to discuss this issues further.

This is therefore a timely reminder for users of the NCIS that they should only be using the system for the purposes for which they have been approved. Should you have any queries about your approved purpose, or wish to amend or extend your approved purpose, please contact Jo Cotsonis, NCIS Access Officer.

### ***New Zealand data to come online***

Data pertaining to 4 years of closed New Zealand coronial cases (from 1 July 2007) has been sent to the NCIS Unit for review and upload to the NCIS. The NCIS Unit is currently liaising with New Zealand to remedy some final mapping issues with the data and once this has been completed, the data will be made available for users. An email alerting all users to the availability of NZ data will be sent out once it is accessible.

### ***Website Design***

A re-design of the public NCIS website is currently underway. All information that was previously available on the website is currently being reviewed and migrated to the new site. We anticipate the new website will be launched in the second half of 2011, with a cleaner look and feel.

### **Response to Recommendations fields**

With the implementation of the recent NCIS interface updates, new fields to allow capture of responses to coronial recommendations were added to the NCIS.

These new fields acknowledge that in several jurisdictions, mandated responses to coronial recommendations (at least for government agencies) are being introduced, and the NCIS Board supported the addition of fields to the system to capture these responses.

While the fields are now present in the system, we are working with each Coronial Office to determine the best process for capturing these responses. Accordingly these fields will be populated over a period of time. We will notify users once each jurisdiction has come online with the current or retrospective population of these fields.

Due to the yet to be completed implementation of the data for these fields, they have been temporarily hidden.

### **Upcoming Events**

#### **AMDIG Workshop**

**Brisbane, 31 October—1 November 2011**

The annual Australasian Mortality Data Interest Group (AMDIG) workshop is being held over two days in Brisbane in October/November. Co-hosted by the National Centre for Health Information Research & Training (NCHIRT), Queensland University of Technology and the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, this year's theme is "Mortality Research Supporting Policy and Practice".

For further information, to register for program updates or to subscribe to the AMDIG Discussion List please email [nchirt@qut.edu.au](mailto:nchirt@qut.edu.au) or visit the workshop website [www.icebergevents.com/injuryprevention2011/AMDIG-Understanding-Mortality-Data-Workshop](http://www.icebergevents.com/injuryprevention2011/AMDIG-Understanding-Mortality-Data-Workshop)

#### **10th National Conference on Injury Prevention & Safety Promotion**

**Brisbane, 2 November—4 November 2011**

The Australian Injury Prevention Network (AIPN) and the Queensland University of Technology's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety Queensland (CARRS-Q) are pleased to invite you to the premier injury prevention conference for Australia and the Asia Pacific, to be held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in Queensland, 2-4 November 2011.

The Conference will be a multi-disciplinary event featuring representatives from all facets of injury prevention including research, teaching, practice and policy. Themes will be varied and cover topics such as road and transport safety, falls and ageing, child safety, water safety (including drowning), rural and remote injury prevention and more.

For further information, to register your interest or to receive the call for papers please visit [www.injuryprevention2011.com](http://www.injuryprevention2011.com).

#### **Asia-Pacific Coroners Society Conference**

**Noosa, 7 November—10 November 2011**

The Asia-Pacific Coroners Society will be holding their annual conference in Noosa in November. The focus for this conference is "Australasian coronial systems 20 years after the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody: achievements and challenges".

For further information, please email conference organisers (Essential Experiences and Events) on [info@essentialexperiences.com.au](mailto:info@essentialexperiences.com.au) or visit the conference website [www.asiapacificcoroners.org](http://www.asiapacificcoroners.org)

## Recent Publications

### **Fact Sheets**

NCIS recently published three Fact Sheets, all of which are available on the NCIS website:

- **Deaths In Emergency Lanes**

On average, three people are killed every year on Australian roads while stationary in emergency lanes.

- **Animal Related Deaths**

Horses, cows and kangaroos are the animals most frequently involved in incidents involving human fatalities.

- **Deaths in the Home**

Two thirds of unintentional deaths in the home reported to Australian Coroners between 2003—2007 involved either drowning, fire, falls or vehicle impact in a driveway setting.

### **10 Year Anniversary Publication**

This publication outlines some of the key contributions NCIS data has made to improving public health and safety over the last 10 years.

### **Fatal Facts**

Edition 21 of Fatal Facts is now available on the NCIS website. The specific topics of focus in Edition 21 involve quad bike deaths and SIDS deaths.

## Data Quality Activities

With the appointment of a new Quality Assistant, the NCIS Quality Manager will be focussing on more overarching quality issues associated with the NCIS. These will include items such as increasing validation rules to minimise coding errors, examining the consistency of assignment of natural and external cause coding for the same medical causes of death, and dealing with duplicate records for the same fatality on the NCIS.

The Quality Team are currently checking cases closed during August 2010, with expectations the

additional Quality Assistant will enable cases to be reviewed more quickly after they are closed on the system. The implementation of additional validation rules into local case management systems should also assist in reducing the number of coding errors to be examined by the QA team.

All New Zealand data available via the NCIS will be subject to the same quality assurance activities as Australian data. Cases closed within time period 1 July 2007 –31 August 2010 will be reviewed in manageable clusters. Reviews for cases closed after this period will be done at the same time as the rest of the data collection.

## User Survey Results

In June 2010, the NCIS Unit distributed a survey to death investigation and third party users of the NCIS to obtain information about how they use the system, and to provide feedback.

99 third party users and 85 death investigators completed the survey, and the following is a broad overview of some of the findings:

- Around 60% of users access the system themselves, with around 40% requesting someone else to conduct the search on their behalf;
- The Find Case screen was found to be the easiest to use, while the Query Design or ABS search screen were ranked the most difficult;
- The ABS search screen (now renamed to External Codes Search screen) is used least frequently;
- The most frequent search method used is to look for certain terms within attached reports;
- The most frequent purpose for accessing the system for both third party and death investigation users is to find the frequency of similar fatalities;
- Satisfaction levels with services and support provided by the NCIS Unit were high, with 98% of respondents indicating they were satisfied or very satisfied;
- Between 75 to 98% of respondents indicated the NCIS was useful and helpful with their work;

- common suggestions for future improvement indicated making the search interfaces easier to use, increased availability and detail in reports and timeliness of cases closure.

A more detailed outline of the survey results and a listing of actions the NCIS Unit have taken to address the suggestions, will be sent to users in the near future.

## Case Closure & Document Attachment Update

### Case closure rates

The current case closure rates across the full NCIS data set indicate that overall 87% of cases on the NCIS are closed. TAS, SA, NT and the ACT have a case closure rate of 90% or more and most States/Territories have a case closure rate of more than 80%.

### Document attachment rates

Queensland is continuing to improve their document attachment rates by manually scanning findings and providing them to NCIS to attach. Additionally, negotiations with the John Tonge centre in QLD mean that NCIS should shortly be receiving Autopsy reports for retrospective cases. NCIS staff continue to work with the forensic provider in South Australia to obtain copies of their medical and scientific reports.

**TABLE 1: Case closure rates (2000-2011)**

State/Territory	% Closed
ACT	94%
NSW	72%
NT	91%
QLD	81%
SA	95%
TAS	92%
VIC	86%
WA	86%
Total	87%

\* As findings only are produced if an inquest has been held in NSW, there is a low percentage of total findings attached.

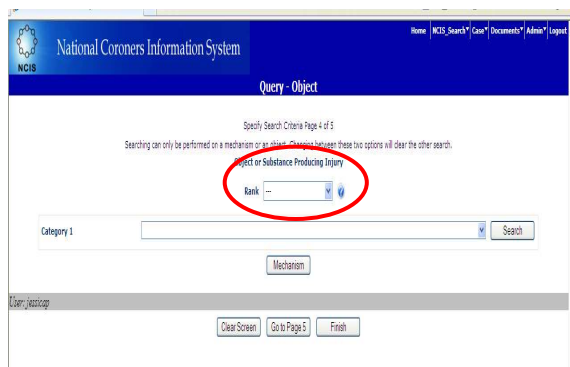
**TABLE 2: Document attachment rates (2000-2011)**

State/Territory	Autopsy	Finding	Toxicology	Police Narrative
ACT	95%	99%	70%	100%
NSW	76%	17%*	79%	52%
NT	94%	95%	62%	96%
QLD	28%	47%	0%	95%
SA	1%	46%	10%	100%
TAS	74%	86%	86%	100%
VIC	91%	99%	97%	94%
WA	58%	95%	81%	100%

## Search Tips for NCIS Users

### **Searching on mechanism and object**

While the NCIS Unit aims for consistency as to the order in which mechanisms and objects are coded on the NCIS, if multiple mechanisms or objects are involved in a fatality, there may be a variable order of ranking applied by coders. For example, a death involving a fall from a cliff might involve the Fall coded as the Primary Mechanism, with Blunt Force coded as the Secondary Mechanism, or visa versa. Therefore, when conducting a search on the mechanism and object fields, it can often be useful to retain the default option (which searches across all ranks for the specified mechanism or object), rather than restricting your search to the mechanism or object within a specific rank position.



### **Quality Assurance Status of NCIS cases**

It is important that users are aware that if a case is listed as having an open status on the NCIS, the coding will not yet have been assessed by the NCIS unit in terms of its accuracy and consistency with coding practices. Furthermore, as the Quality Review process for closed cases is not immediately conducted as soon as a case is closed, there will also be closed cases on the NCIS which have not been quality assured.

At present the NCIS Quality Team are reviewing cases which were closed approximately 9 months earlier. It is the aim of the Quality team to be able to reduce the time between case

closure and quality review. To help inform users as to the quality review status of certain cases, the next release of the NCIS interface will introduce a notation on each case to indicate whether the case has been assessed by the Quality Assurance Process.

### **Comments and Suggestions**

Should users have any queries about the above, or any other aspects surrounding their usage of the NCIS, please don't hesitate to contact a member of the NCIS team. We welcome your input!

If you have any comments or suggestions for the content of NCIS News, please contact the NCIS Admin Officer on (03) 9684 4442 or at [ncis@vifm.org](mailto:ncis@vifm.org).

The next edition of NCIS News is scheduled for release in late 2011.