

NCIS

NCIS News

Spring Edition 2005, Issue 2

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General Information

Welcome to the Spring edition of NCIS News. Since our last edition about 6 months ago, some exciting developments have occurred concerning the NCIS. These include new staff coming on board, and additional information being available on the system.

Staff Changes

We have had two staff replacements over the last 6 months. Karen Holley, our part-time administration officer departed the NCIS in May of this year, to pursue full time employment opportunities. Despite Karen being with the NCIS for a relatively short time, she made large in-roads into helping reorganise our administration side of things, and get us more organised. Karen's replacement Stephen Morton started with the NCIS in August and has already settled in and become an extremely useful member of the NCIS team. Stephen has worked within a range of different agencies across the Department of Justice, and comes to us most recently from the Bureau of Emergency Services Telecommunications.

Rebecca Thornton, NCIS Coronial Liaison Officer has also temporarily departed the NCIS, heading off to the UK to work and travel on 12 months leave. During Rebecca's absence, Megan Bohensky will be with the NCIS until November 2005, 3 days a week. Megan has a background in coronial and health information, having worked in the Coronial Liaison Unit of the VIFM assisting the Victorian Coroners Office in the investigation of possible medical adverse event deaths, and is also completing her Masters in Public Health. We are certain Megan will step into the role of Coronial Liaison Officer easily and will continue Rebecca's good work in encouraging coronial use of the NCIS, and obtaining extra documentation for the system.

Marde Hoy has also taken on some new duties within the NCIS, with her title changing to NCIS Access Officer. Marde will still continue to assist third party users with the application and agreement process, but will expand her duties to include supporting NCIS third party users in all respects of their use with the system. This will include providing third party help desk services, the production of searching tips documentation, and conducting user training sessions. Marde will no doubt bring the same high level of responsiveness and assistance to all third party user support activities that she has in assisting them in applying for NCIS access in the past.



New staff members Stephen Morton and Megan Bohensky

NCIS Funding Update

An independent review of the NCIS and its operations is set to commence in September this year. This review is mandated as part of the new governance structure change, and will result in a report being provided to the NCIS Board of Management, concerning the continuation of government funding past June 2006. Acumen Alliance has been selected as the consultancy firm which will undertake the review on behalf of the NCIS Board of Management, and may be speaking to some NCIS users about their experience with the system over the next month or so.

The NCIS will continue to keep users updated as to the results of the independent review.

On another funding related matter, the NCIS Board of Management recently approved the allocation of some available NCIS funds to be put towards a number of system enhancements. Detail of these enhancements will be outlined on the NCIS website in the near future, however a brief overview of these approved enhancements are:

- geo-coding location information for deceased residence, incident location and death location, so location information can be searched by Local Government Area, and mapped using mapping software;
- the inclusion of data to track responses made to coronial recommendations;
- the upgrading of NCIS classification system to current ICECI version;
- automated case notification (users will be notified via email when a new case of interest in a nominated area is added to the NCIS);
- software which will allow NCIS results to be graphed/mapped to allow easier comparison and analysis; and
- investigation into trend analysis software.

We anticipate these system enhancements will add to the user's experience of the NCIS.

Changes to NCIS User Pays Structure

After the first year of implementation, a review of the NCIS user pays system was conducted in April 2005. It examined the adoption and acceptance of the user pays system, revenue generated and user feedback concerning the fee structure. As a result of this review, recommendations were made concerning proposed amendments to be made to the NCIS fee structure. These recommendations were accepted by the NCIS Board of Management.

As such, the following changes to the user pays system are in effect from July 2005:

- One fee structure for all NCIS users, regardless of whether they are a government or non-government organisation;
- First year's online subscription fee of \$3,300, with the second and subsequent years' online subscription fees reduced to \$2,200 per annum. This acknowledges the reduced administration costs of subscription accounts after the first year.

Hopefully these changes will make the NCIS user fee structure easier to implement, whilst still having affordable user fees to cover the costs of third party use of the system. Should you have any comments or queries about the amendments to the user pays system, please feel free to contact Jessica Pearse on 03 9684 4414.

Quality Assurance

The main focus of the NCIS Quality Team has been two fold over the last six months: Coder Training and Review of Closed NCIS Cases.

NCIS Coder Training

NCIS Coder training has been given priority over the last twelve months, with at least one Coder Training Session being held for each state between November 2004 and May 2005.

In some cases multiple sessions have been held for a state to allow for larger numbers of coders requiring training across different areas of the state.

To coincide with the training sessions, a new version of the NCIS Coding User Manual has been released to all coders who attended the training sessions, and has been placed on the NCIS website. Additional copies of the coding manual are available from the QA Team.

NCIS Coder Training will remain a priority and where necessary additional training sessions will be organised to ensure that all coronial staff responsible for NCIS coding receive the desired training and support.

Any jurisdiction that would like to discuss a training session should contact Leanne Daking on leanned@vifm.org or (03) 9684 4458.

Case Review

In an effort to reduce the backlog of cases to be quality reviewed, the NCIS QA Team has been reviewing three months' worth of data each month. It is envisaged that this will allow us to eliminate the review backlog by early 2006, resulting in the monthly review process examining cases that were closed in the previous calendar month.

To this end, the QA Team has distributed Quality Reports for all cases closed prior to January 2005. Over the next three months, the team will complete analysis of the cases closed to date.

As a result of this increased QA activity, there has been a large workload placed on NCIS coders to make the required coding amendments. The amendment of the errors is a vital step in the QA process and the NCIS Team appreciates the efforts of all those coders helping to ensure that the data held within NCIS is optimal.

Quality Statistics

Total Cases held in NCIS:	98,518
Total Closed Cases:	75,548
Total Closed Cases Reviewed:	58,163
% of Closed Cases Reviewed:	76.99%
Total Cases Reviewed (Mar – Dec 2004):	13,451
Total Errors Identified (Mar – Dec 2004):	4,475
% of Erroneous Cases (Mar – Dec 2004):	33.27%

Document Attachment Update

In July this year we attached the first batch of South Australian toxicology and autopsy reports to the NCIS, in what soon should be a regular upload. There are still a few backlogged reports to come across in the next month, and we are working with the SA Coroners office to determine the best way to get the reports attached regularly.

Some minor IT issues have delayed the attachment of QLD findings to the NCIS, however, we expect by October Coronial findings for QLD should start to be attached to the system. Investigations into the availability of attaching QLD toxicology and autopsy reports to the NCIS is continuing.

Discussions concerning obtaining NSW toxicology reports for attachment to the NCIS is also taking place. NSW Police are considering piloting the national electronic police form which will enable NCIS to receive police narratives much more efficiently. Currently there is a gap in the amount of NSW police narratives attached from 2004 on, but we are looking at various means to obtain these documents to add to the system in the near future.

Some broad statistics on the percentage of documents attached by state are now available on the NCIS website. The statistics also include the number of open and closed cases by state. To view this information, go to http://www.ncis.org.au/web_pages/statistics.htm and click on the 'Documents Attached and Case Status (Open & Closed) Statistics' link.

Coroners Awareness Update

To promote the benefits of the NCIS and increase the number of Coroners and Magistrates accessing the system, NCIS staff have been visiting some of the jurisdictions to provide information about the NCIS and how to search the system effectively.

In July, Rebecca Thornton visited Tasmania and gave a presentation to Magistrates, Coroners Associates, Coroners Clerks and Executive Assistants about the NCIS and its features. Further follow ups for the new users of NCIS will be organised.

In August, Marde Hoy and Rebecca Thornton travelled to Brisbane to provide an information session for some Queensland based third party users as well as QLD Coroners, Magistrates and Coronial Office staff. NCIS Expert User search training was also provided to key Coronial Office staff. There was a great response to this session with search requests from QLD Coroners already coming through.

Also a reminder that we are always available for advice if you have any questions about how to search for specific types of cases.

Upcoming NCIS Activities

16-18 November 2005 – 5th Annual Coroners Conference, Perth WA

NCIS will be attending the Annual Coroners Conference in November to further promote the NCIS to coroners around Australia and internationally.

21 November 2005 – Queensland University, Dept of Public Health Summer School, Brisbane QLD

NCIS will be presenting a paper at the QUT Summer School Course, Understanding Mortality Data: Reaping the Rewards 2005, on the topic of potential data linkages for death data collections.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q What fields do I have to complete on the NCIS Query Design Screen to be able to run a search?

A There are no mandatory fields which need to be completed on any of the 5 pages which make up a Query Design search. Initial viewing of the 5 pages of many fields can be daunting for a first time user. Users should be reassured that they do not need to enter an option for every field on the Query Design Screen. Users should only select options from fields upon which they wish their search to be based, eg. to only return cases which are within this particular group or category.

For example, if you wanted to search across all age ranges in the database, leave the age fields blank. The database will recognise that this is not a parameter upon which the search needs to be narrowed by, and will therefore default to search across all age groups. This also applies if you want the database to do a national search (leave the State box blank – it will default to search across all states).

A further tip is that in selecting options from a hierarchical classification scheme within the NCIS (eg. mechanism or object categories, activity or location codes) you do not always have to select down to the lowest level in the hierarchy.

For example, you might be interested in all deaths that have been coded within the broad heading of "Air Craft and Means of Transport". You can select only this first level heading for your search, which will return all cases which have been classified under this broad heading, rather than having to drill down to the particular type of aircraft coding if you do not require that level of specificity.

NCIS Tips / Tricks

TIP: Using the new ABS Search Screen

The NCIS now features an exciting new search facility – the ABS screen. This search screen allows users to search the NCIS for cases using codes provided by the ABS. These codes cover the geographical location of the deceased's residence (AGSC), the

Australian Standard for Classification of Occupations (ASCO) and the ICD-10 code. Additionally, the screen offers users the opportunity to combine these searches with other criteria, including case year, case status, intent type (completion), case type (completion), sex and age. For more information about these new codes click on the 'more info' links on the ABS search screen.

The new NCIS search screen offers three types of searching:

- Complete search: Users can search on the complete classification for each of the three codes, returning all cases that contain that exact classification (for example, ICD-10 code S029).
- Stem searching: Users can search on the first few digits of the ICD-10, ASCO or ASGC, to retrieve all cases that start with that sequence (for example, ICD-10 code S02).
- Combination searches: All searches on ICD-10, ASCO and ASGC can be combined with any other fields on the ABS search screen (for example, a search on ICD-10 code S02 with intent type (completion) coded as 'interpersonal violence').

To access the ABS search screen, under the NCIS search menu, select the option 'ABS Search'. To construct a search complete the following steps:

1. Enter the relevant ABS code(s) you wish to search with.
2. If searching using the ICD-10 code, select either the 'underlying cause of death' or 'all', which will determine the scope of the ICD-10 search.
3. Select a jurisdiction to search.
4. Select any optional search criteria.
5. Click the 'search' button.

The screenshot displays the 'ABS Search Screen' within a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window. The browser's address bar shows the URL: http://www.vfp.monash.edu.au:8000/ncis/?Mival=abs_query.html. The page features a navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'NCIS Search', 'Case', 'Documents', 'Admin', and 'LOGOUT'. The main content area is titled 'ABS Search Screen' and is divided into several sections:

- ABS codes to search upon:** This section includes radio buttons for 'ICD-10 Underlying COD', 'All', 'ASCO', and 'ASGC State/Territory'. The 'ICD-10' section has a text input field containing 'S02' and an 'or' separator followed by another empty text input field.
- Select jurisdiction to search:** This section includes a checked radio button for 'All States' and a list of checkboxes for Australian states and territories: NSW, VIC, QLD, SA, WA, TAS, NT, and ACT.
- Optional Search Criteria:** This section contains several dropdown menus and input fields: 'Case Year (Start)' and 'Case Year (End)', 'Case Status', 'Intent Type (Completion)', 'Case Type (Completion)' (set to 'Death due to External Cause(s)'), 'Sex', 'Age (Start)' (set to '>=') and 'Age Unit' (set to 'Year(s)'), and 'Age (End)' (set to '<=').

At the bottom of the page, the user is identified as 'User: stephenm'. Below this, there are three buttons: 'Back', 'Clear', and 'Search'. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the 'start' button, several open applications, and the system clock displaying '9:24 AM'.

The results screen presents relevant cases in rows with some general fields returned to provide an overview of the case. The full case can then be accessed via the hyperlink on the NCIS number.

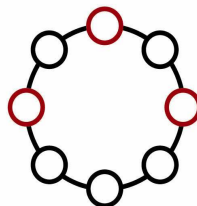
NCIS Case No	Local Case No	Age at death	Case Status	ICD10 Level	ICD10 Code	ASCO Code	A5GC Code	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3123		19 Year(s)	CLOSED	2	S029	9900	105556700	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3317		48 Year(s)	CLOSED	4	S029	8100	130153650	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3341		17 Year(s)	CLOSED	2	S029	8200	140154600	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3353		68 Year(s)	CLOSED	4	S029	8400	135052950	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3441		18 Year(s)	CLOSED	4	S029	9900	130106300	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3471		20 Year(s)	CLOSED	4	S027	8000	115058450	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3473		21 Year(s)	CLOSED	8	S029	4700	115056900	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3501		69 Year(s)	CLOSED	3	S022	9410	188889299	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3539		20 Year(s)	CLOSED	3	S029	4600	125055700	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3640		71 Year(s)	CLOSED	3	S029	8900	105254900	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3729		12 Year(s)	CLOSED	3	S020	9100	120104850	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3729		12 Year(s)	CLOSED	4	S021	9100	120104850	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3820		36 Year(s)	CLOSED	2	S029	4400	105157150	ABS Data
NSW.2000.3985		54 Year(s)	CLOSED	2	S029	4800	105450900	ABS Data
NSW.2000.4079		40 Year(s)	CLOSED	2	S029	4900	150107750	ABS Data

Things to remember when using the ABS screen:

- Not all cases will have ABS codes assigned to them due to the codes not yet being released by the ABS, or not having been coded by ABS;
- NCIS takes no responsibility for the accuracy or reliability of ABS provided codes and does not include this data in its quality assurance processes;
- The results screen returns the underlying cause only for ICD-10 codes, not contributing causes.

Any comments or suggestions?

We welcome your input! If you have any comments on or suggestions for the content of NCIS News, please contact us. The next edition of NCIS News is scheduled for release in early 2006.



NCIS