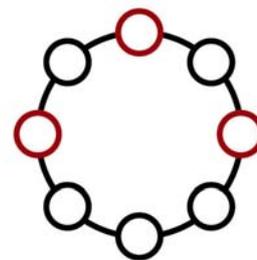


# NCIS News

Edition 18 - August 2017



**NCIS**

*NATIONAL CORONIAL INFORMATION SYSTEM*

## WELCOME

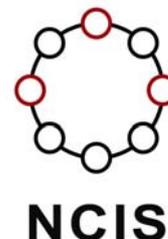
In this edition of NCIS News, we are pleased to announce our new vision statement and the deployment of a new server to improve the speed of searching and using the database. This edition also contains an overview of quality assurance activities in the 2016-17 financial year and a summary of a research project into diving-related fatalities.

As always, we love hearing from our users and welcome any feedback. If you would like to comment on any of the items in this newsletter or would like further information, please contact us at [ncis@ncis.org.au](mailto:ncis@ncis.org.au).

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The NCIS is governed by a Board of Management. Administrative support is provided by the Victorian Department of Justice & Regulation (DJR). The NCIS is funded by each State/Territory Justice Department in Australia and New Zealand, and the Australian Departments of Health, SafeWork Australia, the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission, the Australian Department of Infrastructure & Regional Development and the Australian Institute of Criminology.



## VISION STATEMENT

The National Coronial Information System (NCIS) is a unique dataset and a world first for the national collection of comprehensive medico-legal data and supporting documentation for all deaths reported to a coroner.

Launched in 2000 as a way for coroners to actively share information across jurisdictional borders, over the 17 years since its launch, the system has evolved in both scope and value. Data from New Zealand coronial cases is now included in the dataset and direct system access is available to third party researchers. The NCIS Business Unit offer a 'by request' data report service which is heavily utilised by; all levels of government, community and advocacy groups, coronial investigators, media outlets and any group with an interest in death and injury prevention.

Over the years the purpose of the NCIS has been increasingly refined; to provide quality coronial data to those working in all facets of death prevention. The NCIS is an evidence base providing information about risks to the community. It is an invaluable resource in the development of policy and education to increase community safety.

At a NCIS team workshop in June, the evolution of the purpose of the NCIS was discussed at length and resulted in a new vision statement. The aim of the vision statement is to guide the work we do and to remind us of the value of the NCIS to the community. With that at the forefront, our new vision statement encompasses both what we currently do and what we aim to achieve. The continuous aim of the NCIS, now and into the future is;

### ***Saving lives through the power of data***

This is our vision.

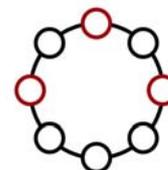
## QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES

Over the last 12 months, the Quality Team made significant progress towards eradicating the backlog of cases awaiting quality review.

In the 2016-17 financial year, the Quality Team reviewed 25 months of data, resulting in a reduction of the backlog from 29 months to 16 months. The number of cases quality assured in this period exceeded 25,000, which was a 23.5% increase in the number of cases reviewed from the previous financial year.

The number of cases awaiting quality review has decreased from 30,059 cases in July 2016 to 19,521 in July 2017, resulting in a 35% reduction of the backlog.

In April 2017, the backlog eradication project was extended and is expected to substantially reduce the backlog. Outcomes of the project will include the provision of feedback to jurisdictions about coding in real-time, delivery of targeted education to coders, and greater confidence amongst all NCIS users that the data has met internal quality review standards.



## NEW NCIS SERVER

At the NCIS, we strive to remain at the forefront of technological developments to ensure the viability of this unique coronial database. On the 22nd of July, the NCIS deployed a new server, which will improve system performance and speed.

If you have noticed improvements in your system usage, we would love to hear your feedback. Please call our office on +61 3 96844442 or email us at [ncis@ncis.org.au](mailto:ncis@ncis.org.au).

## STAFF MOVEMENTS

There have been a number of staff movements and additions within the NCIS team in recent months.

In July, the NCIS welcomed back Natalie Johnson to the role of Manager, NCIS. Natalie returns after a period of 12 months maternity leave, caring for her baby boy, Theodore. In April we farewelled Jessica Jackson as she commenced 12 months maternity leave and in May we were excited to welcome the birth of her daughter, Eva. Keeping things running during all of this maternity leave is Eva Saar, who was skilled and competent as the Manager in Natalie's absence, and is now covering Jessica's role until April 2018 as the Strategy and Development Manager.

Thomas Burgess will continue in Eva's substantive role, Research and Engagement Manager. Katherine Dartnell, who performed the roles of Junior Quality Assistant and Research Assistant, was successful in her application for Thomas' substantive role, Senior Research Officer. Katherine will now work with the Research Team in a full-time capacity.

Following Katherine's appointment, the Quality Team welcomed Alice Bussey as the new Junior Quality Assistant. This is a six month contract to assist with the backlog of cases to be quality assured. Alice has a Criminology background and will be integral to the success of a number of quality assurance activities at the NCIS over the next six months.

Throughout August and September, the NCIS will host two Health Information Management students from La Trobe University. Brigid MacPherson and Ramya Akula are completing the third year of their degree and each will complete a contained project during their time at the NCIS.

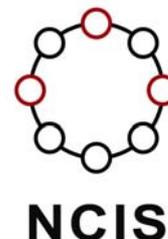
We extend a warm welcome to all new students and staff as well as returning staff. It is a busy and exciting time to be part of the NCIS and the team is ready for the work ahead of us.

## RECENT EVENTS

The Strategy and Development Manager Eva Saar attended the Australian Water Safety Council (AWSC) non-fatal drowning symposium in Sydney on the 30th of June.

A number of NCIS stakeholders were also present, including representatives from the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia and Surf Life Saving Australia.

At the symposium, the impact of non-fatal drowning incidents was discussed and how researchers, policy makers, advocates and practitioners can work together to reduce the incidence of non-fatal drowning in Australia.



## DIVING-RELATED FATALITIES IN AUSTRALIA

**Ever wondered what sort of research other users of the NCIS do? John Lippmann from the Divers Alert Network Asia-Pacific has been kind enough to summarise the work he has completed using data from the NCIS.**

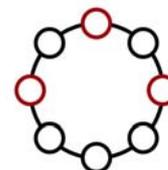
Scuba diving and snorkelling are conducted in a potentially hostile environment and so carry a variety of risks. These may arise from the diving environment itself, or may be related to various other factors, which include the participant's physical, medical and psychological health; training or experience; equipment failure, unfamiliarity or misuse and poor decision-making.

Historically, participants in recreational scuba diving were mainly experienced breath-hold divers who were comfortable in the water and who had sound snorkelling and other water survival skills. However, diving is now undertaken by a broader subset of the population from the very young, to the old and has led to an increase in the number of divers with relatively poor aquatic skills and sometimes poor health and fitness. In addition, some of the earlier divers who have continued to dive have developed medical conditions that may render diving less safe. Unless this situation is carefully monitored and managed by appropriate countermeasures it can result in unnecessary morbidity and mortality.

Underpinning any suitable management and accident prevention system should be the availability of relevant, accurate and detailed data about the incidence and the nature of mortality and morbidity associated with these pursuits. In 2003, the collection of data on diving accidents in Australia became the responsibility of Divers Alert Network Asia-Pacific (DAN AP), under the stewardship of John Lippmann. DAN AP has broadened and modified an historical surveillance system used for diving-related fatalities in order to increase data capture and improve analysis and reporting. Subsequently, DAN AP has compiled a unique resource of all of the almost 800 recorded diving-related fatalities that occurred in Australian waters between 1965 and 2013, inclusive.

We have found increasing evidence of cardiac-related issues, both diagnosed and undiagnosed contributing to diving-related fatalities. We have also identified problems occurring with divers who participate in extended breath-hold diving; those diving with certain co-existing diseases (e.g., diabetes, epilepsy etc); those returning to diving after a break, or who have learned to dive in tropical waters and then attempt to dive without adequate supervision in temperate waters; among various other issues. An area currently under keen observation is the incidence of immersion pulmonary oedema in scuba divers and snorkellers. This has likely been under-reported to date (in scuba divers, snorkellers and swimmers) and this data collection is adding to the body of knowledge.

We are grateful for the invaluable assistance provided by the NCIS team and the various State and Territory Coroners who have enabled us to gather relevant data.



## RESEARCH DATA REPORTS

The NCIS Research Report service continues to experience a high level of productivity, with twelve data reports and seventeen coronial reports produced in the last quarter. The total demand for research reports for the 16-17 financial year was approximately 35 per cent higher than the previous year.

Data reports have been highly sought after by a range of organisations and entities, such as news media, policing and regulatory agencies across a number of topic areas, including intentional self-harm fatalities in specified areas, drowning fatalities and deaths associated with prescription and illicit drug use. These reports will be influential in assisting the development of a number of measures intended to save lives, including a real-time prescription monitoring system in Victoria.

Recent updates to the NCIS database have allowed for greater accuracy and access to a variety of geocoding result details for NCIS users. For example, users are now able to return residential and incident location results relating to Remoteness Area, Statistical Areas 2, 3 and 4 and Local Government Area through the Query Design Search Tool. This geospatial data was previously only available via the data extract service.

In addition, University of Melbourne student Richard Pagone continues as an intern with the NCIS as part of his Master of Criminology, and is producing a report examining amphetamine, methamphetamine and methylamphetamine-related fatalities.

## THIRD PARTY ACCESS APPLICATIONS

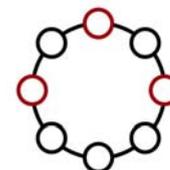
Since April 2017, there have been five new third party applications to the NCIS. These applications have been received from four different types of research organisations including Academic Institutions, Hospitals, Health and Transport Agencies, and Non-Profit Organisations.

The applications span a range of subject areas including Intentional Self-Harm, Physical Health, and Transport & Traffic Related.

The next NCIS closing date for new and renewing applications is Wednesday 6th September 2017. All applications received by this date will be considered at the JHREC meeting on Thursday 26th October.

Applicants are reminded that if their application is requesting access to Victorian data that this must be submitted to the Coroners Court of Victoria Research Committee for consideration before it can be submitted to the JHREC.

Closing dates for application submission to the Coroners Court of Victoria are located on our website.



### NCIS STATISTICS

#### Case closure and Document Attachment Rates for all Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand cases 2000-2017

##### 1. NCIS case closure rates by jurisdiction as of 1st August 2017

Jurisdiction	% cases closed
ACT	97%
NSW	89%
NT	96%
QLD	92%
SA	94%
TAS	93%
VIC	84%
WA	93%
NZ*	89%

\* The NCIS only contains closed cases from New Zealand, however this figure for NZ indicates the proportion of closed cases on the NCIS as a function of all NZ Coronial cases (open and closed), as indicated by the NZ Coronial Services Centre.

##### 2. NCIS case document attachment by jurisdiction as of 1st August 2017

Jurisdiction	Autopsy	Finding	Toxicology	Police
ACT	93%	97%	74%	98%
NSW	74%	62%	67%	54%
NT	94%	97%	73%	97%
QLD	66%	64%	39%	96%
SA	0%	99%	25%	100%
TAS	83%	90%	88%	98%
VIC	94%	91%	97%	88%
WA	77%	97%	90%	100%
NZ	98%	98%	79%	97%

Further detail related to the above statistics are available at:  
<http://www.ncis.org.au/data-collection-2/operational-statistics/>



## FATAL FACTS

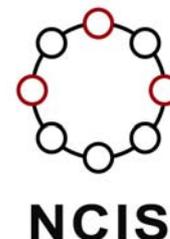
Fatal Facts is a publication produced by the NCIS which summarises coronial cases where a coroner has made recommendations with a view to prevent similar fatalities occurring in the future.

The NCIS *Fatal Facts Search* tool allows users to search on recommendations made by a Coroner across cases closed between 1st May 2007 and 31st December 2012.

You can access *Fatal Facts Search* at [www.ncis.org.au](http://www.ncis.org.au).

Information about the latest edition of Fatal Facts, published since the last NCIS News is provided below.

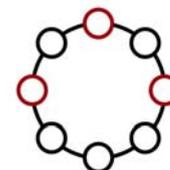
<b>Fatal Facts Edition</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Coverage period (cases closed between)</b>	1st October 2012 - 31st December 2012
<b>Release Date</b>	July 2017
<b>No. of Recommendations</b>	78
<b>- Australian</b>	43
<b>- New Zealand</b>	35
<b>Topics covered</b>	Adverse Medical Effects, Aged Care, Animal Related, Child & Infant Deaths, Drugs & Alcohol, Electrocution, Falls, Fire Related, Homicide & Assault, Indigenous, Law Enforcement, Leisure Activity, Mental Illness & Health, Misadventure, Natural Causes, Older Persons, Physical Health, Sports Related, Transport & Traffic Related, Water Related, Weather Related, Work Related and Youth.



## NCIS DATA REFERENCES

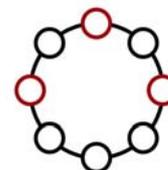
Recent publications that have referenced data from the NCIS include:

- Bryant, W., & Bricknell, S. (2017). Homicide in Australia 2012-13 to 2013-14: National Homicide Monitoring Program report. *AIC Statistical report, 2*. Retrieved from [http://aic.gov.au/media\\_library/publications/sr/sr002.pdf](http://aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/sr/sr002.pdf)
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- Darke, S., Kaye, S., & Duflour, J. (2017). Rates, characteristics and circumstances of methamphetamine-related death in Australia: A national 7 year study. *Addiction*. doi: 10.1111/add.13897
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- Ibrahim, J. E., Bugeja, L., Willoughby, M., Bevan, M., Kipsaina, C., Young, C., ... Ranson, D. L. (2017). Premature deaths of nursing home residents: an epidemiological analysis. *The Medical Journal of Australia*. doi: 10.5694/mja16.00873
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- Koo, Y., Kolves, K., & De Leo, D. (2017). Suicide in older adults: Differences between the young-old, middle-old, and oldest old. *International Psychogeriatrics, 1-10*. doi: 10.1017/S1041610217000618



## NCIS DATA REFERENCES (cont.)

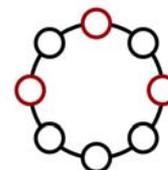
- Korda, R. J., Clements, M. S., Armstrong, B. K., Di Law, H., Guiver, T., Anderson, P. R., ... Kirk, M. D. (2017). ACT Asbestos Health Study: Data Linkage Study on the Risk of Mesothelioma and Other Cancers in Residents of Affected Properties in the ACT. Retrieved from [http://nceph.anu.edu.au/files/ACTAHS\\_DataLinkageStudy\\_15June2017.pdf](http://nceph.anu.edu.au/files/ACTAHS_DataLinkageStudy_15June2017.pdf)
- Lilley, R., Lower, T., & Davie, G. (2017). Towards a harmonised approach to reducing quad-related fatal injuries in Australia and New Zealand: a cross-sectional comparative analysis. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. doi: 10.1111/1753-6405.12675
- Lower, T., Rolfe, M., & Monaghan, N. (2017). Trends and Patterns in Unintentional Injury Fatalities in Australian Agriculture. *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health*, 23(2), 139-151. doi: 10.13031/jash.12091
- Manuel, J., Crowe, M., Inder, M., & Henaghan, M. (2017). Suicide prevention in mental health services: A qualitative analysis of coroners' reports. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. doi: 10.1111/inm.12349
- McDermott, K. M., Brearley, M. B., Hudson, S. M., Ward, L., & Read, D. J. (2017). Characteristics of trauma mortality in the Northern Territory, Australia. *Injury Epidemiology*, 4(1). doi: 10.1186/s40621-017-0111-1
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- Peden, A. E., Franklin, R. C., Leggat, P., & Aitken, P. (2017). Causal Pathways of Flood Related River Drowning Deaths in Australia. *PLOS Current Disasters*, 1. doi: 10.1371/currents.dis.001072490b201118f0f689c0fbe7d437
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- Stafford, J., & Breen, C. (2017). Australian Trends in Ecstasy and Related Drug Markets 2016: Findings from the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS). *Australian Drug Trends*, 172. Retrieved from [https://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/ndarc/resources/National\\_EDRS\\_%202016\\_FINALwith%20customs.pdf](https://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/ndarc/resources/National_EDRS_%202016_FINALwith%20customs.pdf)



## NCIS IN THE NEWS

Recent media articles in print, radio and online that have referenced the NCIS include:

- Branley, A. (2017). *ACCC has serious public safety concerns about common gas products*. Retrieved June 14, 2017, from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-13/accc-has-safety-concerns-over-common-gas-products/8610142>
- Madigan, M. (2017). *Dozens of construction workers dying or facing serious injury each year because of suicide attempts*. Retrieved July 9, 2017, from <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/dozens-of-construction-workers-dying-or-facing-serious-injury-each-year-because-of-suicide-attempts/news-story/b10a346bbd0cb4dfccdbf80df88d73e4>
- Pearce, M. (2017). *Early deaths recorded in aged care increase across Australia, study reveals*. Retrieved May 30, 2017, from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-05-29/early-deaths-in-aged-care-increase-across-australia-study-shows/8567762>



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## NCIS FEEDBACK

The NCIS welcomes any comments, suggestions or queries about the content of this newsletter or the NCIS generally.

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