General Search Tips – New Zealand

National Coronial Information System

Contents

1   Introduction

The NCIS is a data storage and retrieval system containing coronial information from Australia and New Zealand. It enables coroners, their staff, public sector agencies, researchers and other agencies to access coronial data to inform death and injury prevention activities. The NCIS contains data about deaths reported to an Australian coroner from July 2000, and to a New Zealand coroner from July 2007.

NCIS data is accessible to death investigators assisting the coroner and researchers with an ethically approved research project. For more information about how to access the data, please visit our website.

This guide is intended to assist those with access to the NCIS in constructing a search. It details the various types of search options available and how to refine searching to maximise results.

For specific questions or to arrange a search training session, please contact the NCIS (ncis@ncis.org.au).

2   Find Case Screen

The Find Case screen allows searches for cases where some of the details of a specific case are known, such as a name, date of birth or case information.

Some tips for searching on this screen:
- Searches can be made for a complete name e.g. John Smith or part of a name e.g. JO SMI.
- To search by name a Surname or part thereof must be entered. Searches by First Names only cannot be done without selecting a jurisdiction.

Select Case Status: Closed for your search. All New Zealand cases on the NCIS are closed.

If a NCIS reference number is available e.g. NZ.2010.000 then these numbers can be entered into the Find Case screen like this.

The reference number is comprised of the Jurisdiction, Case Year and Case Sequence.

Alternatively, the NCIS reference number can be entered into the Jump To field at the bottom of the screen.

RESULTS

Once the search parameters have been entered, click Search at the bottom of the screen. A list of results will appear.

Click on Access Record to access specific details for that case.

Case Detail Screen

This screen provides the demographic and identifying information about the deceased. The NCIS Reference number can be found in the top left corner of the screen, the Local Case Number in the top right.

At the bottom of the Case Detail screen are the available Case Reports for the selected case.

Clicking on a Case Report will open a new tab or window showing the PDF report.

Other case information is available from the Case drop-down menu at the top of the screen. Hover over this menu and more options will be available to view further information about this individual case.
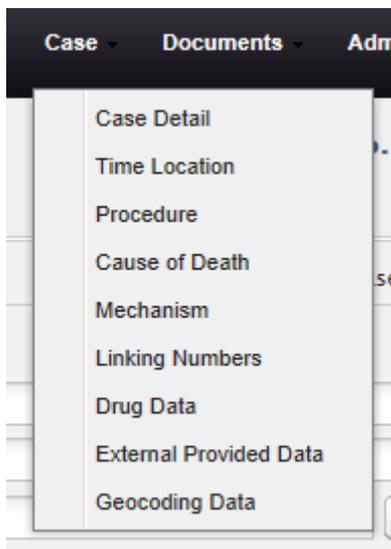
Options available include Time Location of the incident and death, the Medical Cause of Death, and Mechanism of Death.

External Provided Data will show the ICD-10AM codes assigned to the case.

3   Find Case: Example Search

EXAMPLE SEARCH: MALE BORN ON 1 JANUARY 1975 WHO DIED IN 2015

This Find Case example will search for a male who is known to have been born on 1 January 1975, and died in a specific year.

Steps:

- Enter the Find Case screen.

- Click on the <u>Jurisdiction</u> drop down menu and select 'NZ' for New Zealand.

- For <u>Case Year</u> below, select '2015'.

- Date of Birth can only be searched on closed cases, so <u>Case Status</u> should be set to 'Closed'.

- Enter 01/01/1975 in the <u>Date of Birth</u> field.

- On the right side of the screen, select 'Male' for <u>Sex</u>.

- Click Search.

Jurisdiction:	NZ		Surname:	
Case Year:	2015		Firstname:	
Case Sequence:			Sex:	Male
Local Case Number:			Court:	
			Post Mortem No:	
Case Status:	Closed		Multiple Fatality Event	
Date of Birth:	01/01/1975		(MFE): Search:	
Date Notified Between (Month/Year):	>=	<=		

4   Query Design Screen

The Query Design screen allows the construction of a search query based on desired search parameters. As many or as few parameters can be selected from each of the five tabs that build the search as desired, and tabs that are not relevant can be skipped. The final sixth tab allows the selection of fields wanted to view in the results.

Broad and narrow searches can be run on the NCIS. A broad search would consist of a few search parameters (e.g. assault cases) and would have a large number of results. A narrow search by comparison would have more search parameters (e.g. assault cases for persons aged 18-50 where the mechanism of injury was stabbing) and return fewer results, as the search is more specific. Broad searches are useful for returning larger numbers of cases where details can be reviewed and cases identified which are relevant to the research. A narrow search will instead return a small selection of cases which are more likely to be relevant, but may not capture as many as a broad search would.

1 - Case Details	2 - Occupation	3 - Time Location	4 - Mechanism/Object	5 - Cause of Death	6 - Result Details

Tab 1: Case Detail

1 - Case Details

This first screen allows searches by variables such as age range, gender, date range, jurisdiction, intent, case type and more. Searches can be refined by selecting any number of variables.

Some tips for searching the Case Details tab:

- To search by dates and age ranges, select the Use Date Search Options tickbox located directly underneath the row of tabs. If these options are left blank, the system will search across all ages and date ranges.

- Cases are recorded in the NCIS at both the **Notification** (reported to a Coroner) stage, and at the **Completion** (investigation closed by the Coroner) stage. The Notification and Completion tickboxes relate to the Case and Intent Type fields. To search by Intent, select the appropriate field from Intent Type. It is recommended to search by Completion for the final determination of Intent and Case Type.
- Select 'NZ' in the Case Jurisdiction menu. Even if this is the only option available, it must be selected to ensure the system will search.
- Keyword searches of documents can be conducted at the bottom of the screen. Remember to select at least one report type when keyword searching.

- It is recommended that **broader queries** are constructed rather than limiting searches by selecting more variables. The final tab of Query Design allows selection of which fields will be returned – results can then be exported to Excel and irrelevant records removed.

Tab 2: Occupation

The Occupation tab allows you to search by employment status, employment categories and industries, or the type of employment undertaken at the time of an incident.

Tips for searching on the Occupation tab:
- To search by Employment Status, select an option from the drop down menu. To search for more than one type of employment e.g. 'Unemployed' and 'Retired/Pensioner' these searches will need to be run separately and then the results combined together.
- The Usual Occupation field contains coded occupation types from the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) developed by the ABS.
- To search for a particular occupation, it is recommended that searches are done on Occupation Text. This is a free text field and is required to be populated, whereas the Usual Occupation code field is not. Occupations may be recorded in various ways, so try multiple searches to cover the occupation of interest (e.g. 'nurse', 'nursing', 'nurs'). Only one occupation can be searched at a time, but results can be combined using the export function.

- The Occupation Code and Text can also be displayed on the Results page; if it is uncertain how the occupation of interest might be recorded, conduct a broad search and then check the Occupation Text field in the results and exclude irrelevant results.

Tab 3: Time Location

| 3 - Time Location |

The Time Location tab allows users to search for activities and locations related to the deceased at either the time of the Incident, Death, the time Last Seen Alive or time Body Found. Location search options are on the left, and activity search options are on the right. The Activity Code is only available for the Time Location Type of 'Incident'.

To search on this screen, select an option from Time Location Type at the top of the screen. This ensures no duplicates will be returned, as some cases may have occurred at the same location for both incident and death.

Tips for searching on the Time Location tab:
- The Incident and Death location type and address can either be the same, or different. Some deaths occur almost immediately after the incident in the same location, while in others people may be transferred to a different location (such as a hospital) before death occurs. If the search requires knowledge of where the death itself occurred, select Death from the Time Location Type menu. This is useful for searches focusing on deaths in particular areas (e.g. suburbs, hospitals). However many users are more interested in the location of the Incident leading to death, rather than the Death location itself. An example of this would be cases involving falls from heights, as the location of the Incident is significant in these cases.
- There are several levels for both Location and Activity codes. A broad Location Code search at Level One (e.g. 'Medical Service Area') can be performed or searches can then get more specific at Level Two (e.g. 'Hospital'). If the search is made on just Level One, all the codes in Level Two will be returned for the search.
- Activity Code also has two levels to search on. If however 'Sport and Exercise During Leisure Time' is selected, additional Sports Code levels will appear to enable searching of specific sport types (e.g.'Racquet Sports' → 'Tennis'). When looking for a few different sports codes, run multiple searches and combine the results through the export function. A broad search can also be conducted on a higher level (e.g. 'Raquet Sports') and then any cases that are not relevant to the search can be removed.

- Searches can also be conducted by date (such as Date of Incident) and physical locations (such as suburb or post code).

Tab 4: Mechanism / Object

4 - Mechanism/Object

The Mechanism/Object tab allows users to search for cases which feature specific mechanisms of injury or objects causing injury.

The **Mechanism** is the condition or circumstance in which the injury causing death was sustained (e.g. transport injury event, hanging). The **Object** is the physical entity that produced the injury causing death (e.g. passenger car, rope). In each case there may be multiple mechanisms and objects, and these are ranked in order of contribution to the death. There are three ranks: Primary, Secondary 1, and Secondary 2. The Primary rank refers to the direct mechanism or object, the Secondary 1 rank refers to the underlying mechanism or object, and Secondary 2 rank refers to the intermediate mechanism or object.

Tips for searching by Mechanism and Object:
- Searches can be done by *either* mechanism *or* object, or by *both* at once.
- As many or as few levels can be selected as desired for Mechanism and Object. The more levels selected, the narrower the search will be, returning fewer results.
- In some cases, there may be more than one Object / Mechanism of injury, and various ranks can be coded for one case. For example, the objects contributing to a death might be 'Passenger Car' (Rank 1 - Primary), 'Roadway' (Rank 2 – Secondary 1), and 'Tree, Plant' (Rank 3 - Secondary 2). Specific ranks can be selected at the top of the screen, however it is recommended to leave this blank when wanting to search across all possible involvement of the Mechanism or Object, regardless of its "coded order."
- Mechanism or Object terms can be searched for using the Search function. Selecting a result will fill in the appropriate level codes.

- If "Pharmaceutical Substance for Human Use" is selected in the Object field, a new section of the screen will appear that allows selection of one or more drug names from a defined list.

Tab 5: Cause of Death

5 - Cause of Death

This tab allows users to search for cause(s) of death taken from the autopsy report. This is the medical cause of death determined by the forensic pathologist.

Tips for searching on Cause of Death:
- Ensure that All is selected for the Cause of Death tickbox options. The NCIS then searches for cause of death as a direct contributor at the time of the incident, or as a pre-existing condition that may have contributed to death. There can be up to six levels for cause of death (1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 2 and 3).
- It is recommended that word stems are used to ensure all possible cases are identified. For example, 'gamma' will return 'Gammahydroxybutyrate' and also variations in spelling such as 'gamma-hydroxy-butylate'. Another example would be 'hang', which would also return 'hanged' and 'hanging'. Do not use the * symbol when searching on this field.

Tab 6: Result Details

6 - Result Details

The Result Details tab allows users to select the fields to be returned in the search results. There are over 80 fields to select from.

Tips for using the Result Details screen:

- It is recommended to select no more than roughly half of the tickboxes available on this page. Do not select them all – this will result in an error, as the system can only display 10,000 characters in a single row on the results screen. Selecting too many tickboxes will exceed this character limit.
- When selecting 'Age', make sure to also select 'Age Unit'. This is the time measurement of the number e.g. 7 days or 7 years.
- At the bottom of the page is the <u>Results per page</u> option. Select 'All' from this menu when intending to export results to Excel. This allows the system to export all results into one Excel spreadsheet.
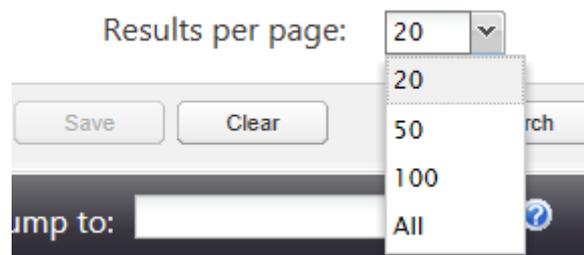
5 Query Design: Example Searches

EXAMPLE SEARCH 1: TRANSPORT DEATHS BETWEEN 2010-2015 INVOLVING HELMETS

This Query Design example will involve search for cases where the death involved mention of the presence or absence of a helmet in a transport injury event over a set time period. The majority of the search parameters will be entered on the first tab, Case Details.

Steps:

- Enter the Query Design screen and the first tab.
- Click on Use Date Search Options. On the right side of the screen, use the Date Notified Start and End fields to input the following dates: 01/01/2010 and 31/12/2015.
    - Date Notified refers to the date the coroner was notified of the death. This is likely to be the closest to the date of death.

- Moving further down the screen on the left, select Case Status: Closed.
- On the middle column, tick Completion. Under Case Type, select 'Death Due to External Causes'.
- On the far right, under Case Jurisdiction, select 'NZ' for New Zealand.

- Scroll to the bottom of the page where Report Search is located. Enter "helmet" in the Text in Reports search box. Select which reports to search; for this example, tick 'Findings' and 'Police' as they are the reports most likely to feature the search term.

- To make the search more specific than this – for instance, searching only for blunt force injury deaths during transport – move to the fourth tab, Mechanism/Object.
    - To search for blunt force deaths, select Mechanism of Injury **Level 1**: Blunt Force and then **Level 2**: Transport Injury Event. Further details can be specified at Level 3 if required.
- Move to the Result Details tab. Select the fields to return; useful fields for this search would include those under Mechanism, Vehicle Crash, Object, Time Location, and Medical Cause of Death.
- Select "All" results per page
- Click Search.
- Note: Remember when searching by keyword that you will need to manually review the attached case reports to determine if the case is relevant or not. The keyword 'helmet' may appear in case reports without it being a factor in the person's death.

EXAMPLE SEARCH 2: INTENTIONAL SELF-HARM DEATHS IN UNEMPLOYED PERSONS AGED 18 - 50

This Query Design example will search for intentional self-harm groups in two specific subsets: age and employment status.

Steps:
- Enter the Query Design screen and the first tab.
- Click on Use Date Search Options. On the left hand side of the screen, use the Age Start and End fields to enter the following values: 18 and 50. Ensure the final drop down menu on this road is set to "Year(s)" for the age unit.

Age:	>= ⌄	Start:	18	<= ⌄	End:	50	Year(s) ⌄

- Moving further down the screen on the left, select Case Status: Closed.
- On the middle column, tick Completion. Under Case Type, select 'Death Due to External Causes'. Under Intent Type, select 'Intentional Self-Harm.'

☐ Notification	☑ Completion

Note: When both selected it is treated as an 'or'

Case Type:	Death due to External Cause(s) ⌄
Intent Type:	Intentional Self–Harm ⌄

- On the far right, under Case Jurisdiction, select 'NZ' for New Zealand.
- Move to the second tab, Occupation. Under Employment Status, select 'Unemployed'.
  - To search for other values such as 'Retired/Pensioner', repeat the search and select this status.

| Employment Status:	Unemployed
Usual Occupation:	
Occupation Text:	

- Move to the Result Details tab. Select the fields to return; useful fields for this search would include those in Case Details, Mechanism, Object, and Medical Cause of Death.
- Select "All" results per page
- Click Search.

6   Exporting, Saving and Unloading Searches

The NCIS allows exporting of searches to other file formats, and also the saving of searches in Query Design. A saved search enables users to load the previous search criteria and manually review and either rerun the same search to identify any new cases of interest or slightly adjust the previous search and rerun it.

Exporting Results

The results of any search can be exported. When on the screen of search results, the export options can be found in the bottom right corner of the screen.
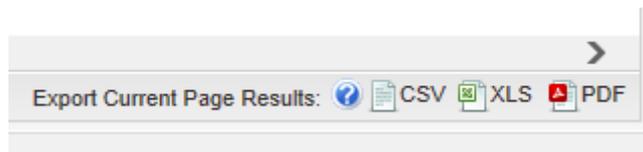

Click on the desired export format and save the file. The export will include every field selected for the search. Excel exports are useful as they allow users to sort the results using filters with the easy addition of columns or removal of irrelevant cases.
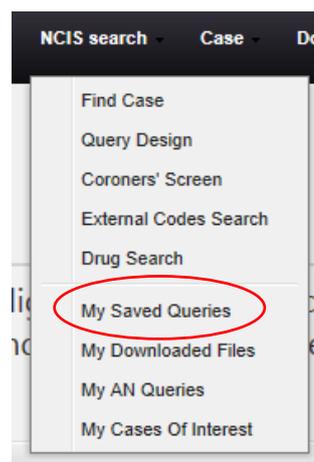
Saving a Search

To save a search so the parameters can be accessed later fill out the parameters of the search on the first five tabs as usual, and then select the sixth tab (Result Details) and enter a Query Name in the top field just below the tabs.

These options will be visible in the top left corner:
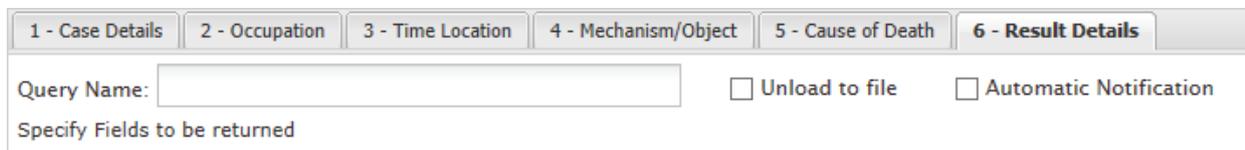
The Query Name should be something descriptive for later reference e.g. 17 Feb 2017 Fire Search. Once the name is entered, a 'Save' button will appear at the bottom of the screen next to 'Search'. Click 'Save' and the query will be saved into 'My Saved Queries', which is accessed from the NCIS Search menu.
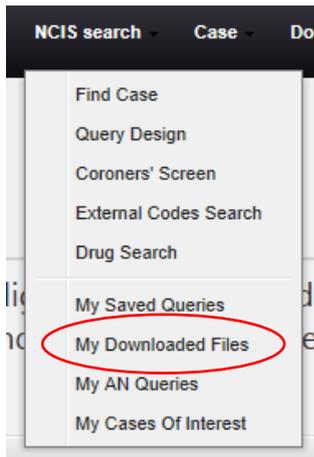
Unloading a Search to File

A search can be run in the background of NCIS and then unloaded to file, ready for download. To unload to file, fill out the parameters of the search on the first five tabs as usual, and then select the sixth tab (Result Details) and enter a Query Name in the top field just below the tabs.

Tick <u>Unload to File</u> next to the Query Name field. Once the name is entered and Unload to File selected, a 'Schedule' button will appear at the bottom of the screen where 'Search' was previously. Click 'Schedule' and the query will be scheduled to run. The search will be located in 'My Downloaded Files', which is accessed from the <u>NCIS Search</u> menu.

Once the search has been run, an email notification will be sent and an Excel file will be available to download from the 'My Downloaded Files' page.

Automatic Notification

Searches can be configured to run on a regular basis and notify the user of any new cases that have been added that match their search parameters. This is known as the Automatic Notification option. To set up automatic notifications, fill out the parameters of the search on the first five tabs as usual, and then select the sixth tab (Result Details) and enter a Query Name in the top field just below the tabs.

Tick <u>Automatic Notification</u> next to the Query Name field. Once these steps are done, a 'Schedule' button will appear at the bottom of the screen where 'Search' was previously. Click 'Schedule' and the query will be scheduled to run. The search will be located in 'My AN Queries', which is accessed from the <u>NCIS Search</u> menu.

Automatic Notification queries run once a week, and the system will email the user to notify them if any new cases have been identified. Return to 'My AN Queries' and find the search, then select 'Run'. The search will then run through the system and return any new results.

7   External Codes Search

While the majority of coded data on the NCIS has been populated by the originating coroner's courts, there is also a set of external codes that are provided by an organisation external to the coronial process: the New Zealand Ministry of Health (MoH). The MoH assigns International Classification of Diseases – Australian Modification (ICD-10AM) codes to cases based on the cause of death. The External Codes Search screen can be accessed from the NCIS Search menu.

ICD-10AM Code searches

The left side of the screen relates to ICD-10AM codes. NCIS cases have multiple ICD-10AM codes assigned to the case depending on the complexity of conditions that caused the death. The ICD-10AM (Underlying COD) relates to the underlying cause of death for the case.

Searches can be conducted for the ICD-10AM Underlying COD, or across all ICD-10 codes. Enter the desired code in the Search boxes, and add any additional parameters by selecting the Use advanced search criteria tickbox at the bottom of the screen.

8   Ethnicity

Ethnicity is exclusive to New Zealand cases, while Indigenous Origin relates exclusively to Australian cases. Both of these fields can be found on the first tab of the Query Design search screen. Indigenous Origin cannot be searched for New Zealand cases, even if the field is present on the search screen.

When searching for specific ethnicity cases such as Maori or New Zealand European, this field can be used to search.
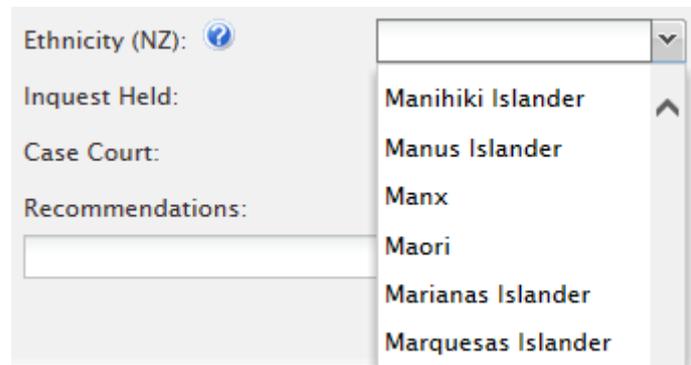
Users interested in multiple values will need to run an independent search for each value. Search results can be exported to Excel and combined to form one master list.

When wanting to view an Ethnicity value for relevant cases returned in any search, select "Indigenous Origin (AUS)/Ethnicity (NZ)" on the Result Details tab for the Query Design search.

9   Technical Specifications

Please note that the NCIS is supported on the following internet browsers only:

- Internet Explorer versions 9+, or Microsoft Edge
- Firefox 5+ (preferably above 10)
- Chrome (recent releases)
- Safari 5+

Whilst attempts have been made to accommodate the various versions and types of browsers available, significantly older browsers do not conform to current web standards. As such, they cannot be guaranteed to operate correctly with modern websites.

10   Troubleshooting

I have set up my search parameters and hit Search, but received an error message saying I have exceeded the number of rows.

This error message means that the search is trying to return over 5,000 results. The NCIS has a limit of 5,000 cases that can be returned for an individual search, and the system will alert the user if the search exceeds this. Try narrowing the search through additional parameters such as by calendar year. Results can then be exported and combined to create one master list.

I've received an error message while trying to do a keyword search saying a data field has an error.

Users with Level 1 access to New Zealand have permission to search everything for closed cases, but no capacity to search on open cases which are not included in the system. This includes keyword searching on case reports. Attempting to run a keyword search without specifying closed cases will result in an error message as the system tries to search on both open and closed cases. On the Find Case or Query Design screens, ensure you select 'Closed' for Case Status then run the search again.

I ran a search and wanted to change my selections, but when I clicked back on my browser the search page was blank again. Can I return to my original search?

The original search can be returned to but not using the browser's back button. On the search results page there is a button at the bottom of the screen that says 'Back to search Page'.
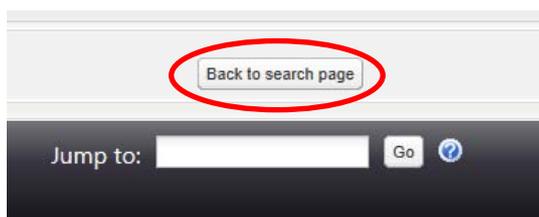
Click on this button and NCIS will return to the original search page where the parameters can be changed as desired.

I have set up my search but received an error message saying some fields have an error, but I can't find where this error is.

The most common reason for receiving this error is users have entered a keyword search term, but have not selected which reports to search on. Return to the first tab of the Query Design and check if the keyword search box is highlighted in red. Tick at least one case report and the search should now run. This error may also occur for the same reason in the Medical Cause of Death keyword search; ensure one or more level boxes have been checked, and the search should run.

I've received an error message saying my search is too complex.
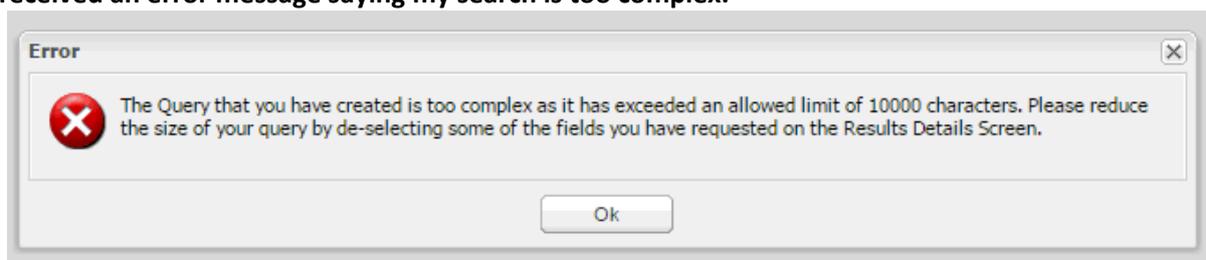
This message appears when too many fields have been selected to return on the sixth Query Design tab ("Result Details"). If everything is selected on this page, this message will appear. Untick some of the selections and then try searching again.

I have my search results but need to export names and addresses. Can I do this on NCIS?
Only NCIS staff can export fields such as names, addresses, and other identifying information. If this information is required in a spreadsheet format, please contact the NCIS for a data extract.

11   Glossary

Body Found
This category is used to record information about date, location and address if a body has been found where the death was not witnessed.

Case Status
Cases are added to the NCIS at the time of notification to the Coroner. During the investigation, the case status is listed as 'open'. Case details are updated throughout the investigation. On completion of the coronial investigation, when a cause of death has been determined and the Coroner has made a Finding, all case details and documentation are finalised and the case status is changed to 'closed' on the NCIS.

Case Type on Completion
Case Type Completion is coded by staff in each coronial court in Australia and New Zealand based on information in the post mortem report and/or coronial finding which indicates whether the death was from a natural or external cause event.

Case Type on Notification
This field is coded by staff in each coronial court in Australia and New Zealand based on the preliminary information available at the time of reporting of the death. Case Type on Notification is coded based on whether the death appears to be from natural or external cause events, and is to be used as an initial guide only. Information available at the time of notification is preliminary and subject to change following the coroner's investigation of the case and their findings. A final determination as to case type can be found in the Case Type on Completion field.

Completion
Completion refers to determinations that have been made based on information from the completed coronial investigation. Any variable noted with 'Completion' such as Intent Type and Case Type is the final determination made.

Death
Death refers to the moment when the person's death occurs. Similar to Incident, information relating to Death includes the date, the location and the address.

Ethnicity
New Zealand cases refer to Ethnicity and this field is unique to New Zealand. Ethnicity refers to the ethnic group or groups with which individuals identify and is a cultural affiliation rather than race.

Incident
The incident refers to the moment when the injury or incident resulting in death occurs. Incident information can include the date, activity undertaken, the location, and the address.

Geocoding
Geocoding is the process of converting a street address into geographic coordinates of latitude and longitude. Geocoding also refers to the process of assigning geographic boundaries such as Local Government Areas (LGA) to latitude and longitude data.

Indigenous Origin
Indigenous Origin refers to whether a person is identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Inquest
An inquest is a court hearing conducted by a coroner to determine the cause and circumstances of a person's death, and the person's identity. Not all investigations require an inquest.

Intent Type on Completion
This field is coded by staff in each coronial court in Australia and New Zealand based on the finding of the investigating Coroner. Intent Type on Completion is based on specific statements in the finding regarding the deceased's intent.

Intent Type on Notification
This field is coded by staff in each coronial court in Australia and New Zealand based on the preliminary information available at the time of reporting of the death. Intent Type on Notification is coded based on whether the death appears to be from self harm or unintentional events, and is to be used as an initial guide only. Information available at the time of notification is preliminary and subject to change following the coroner's investigation of the case and their findings. A final determination as to intent can be found in the Intent Type on Completion field.

Last Seen Alive
If the incident or death of a person was not witnessed, 'Last Seen Alive' is used to record information about date, location and address where the person was last known to be alive.

Notification
Notification refers to coding performed at the time of notification to the coroner. Information coded at the time of notification is preliminary and subject to change following the coroner's investigation of the case and their findings.

Mechanism of Injury
The Mechanism of Injury is the condition or circumstance in which the injury is sustained. E.g. 'Blunt Force'.

Object
The Object is the physical entity causing the injury. E.g. 'Tree'.

Recommendations
A coroner may make recommendations on matters connected to a death that relates to public health and safety, administration of justice or methods to prevent future deaths.

Reportable
All Australian and New Zealand coronial jurisdictions investigate deaths in accordance with their respective *Coroners Act*. Each *Act* defines what constitutes a 'reportable death' to determine which deaths must be investigated by a Coroner. The definition of a 'reportable death' may vary between jurisdictions, it is therefore not always possible to compare frequencies of certain types of deaths between jurisdictions.

12   Contact Us

For any queries about running a search, difficulty logging into an NCIS account or anything else related to the NCIS, please feel free to contact us.

Phone: +61 3 9684 4442
Email: ncis@ncis.org.au
www.ncis.org.au