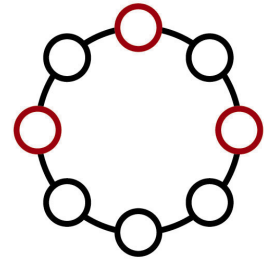


# NCIS News

Edition 21 - July 2018



**NCIS**

NATIONAL CORONIAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

## WELCOME

In this edition of NCIS News, we are pleased to provide updates regarding the following long term projects:

- The NCIS *Pharmaceutical Substance for Human Use Codeset Upgrade* in September.
- The conclusion of the NCIS *Quality Assurance Backlog Eradication Project*.

This edition also contains a summary of a research project focusing on tramping in New Zealand and notes relating to the latest edition of *Fatal Facts*.

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).

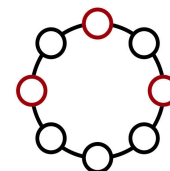
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Justice  
and Regulation

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.



## PHARMACEUTICAL SUBSTANCE FOR HUMAN USE CODESET UPGRADE

Over the past two years, in consultation with coders, researchers and toxicologists, the NCIS has conducted a review of our Pharmaceutical Substance for Human Use codeset (hereafter referred to as the Pharmaceutical Codeset). Based on this review, we are now preparing to implement changes to the mechanical structure of this codeset. These changes are intended to simplify drugs coding and increase coding consistency across all Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions. By increasing the sophistication of the system we can ensure greater confidence in drug-related cases on the NCIS for both coders and researchers.

Essential to the changes is the need to make coding of drugs-related cases more straight forward at the point of data entry. For coders, the upgrade will:

- Enable a new searchable list of drugs to select from.
- Reduce the need to manually type in drug names or classifications.
- No longer require coders to specify the state of the drug (i.e. solid, liquid, or gaseous)
- Link substances to their respective drug classes and parent drugs automatically.

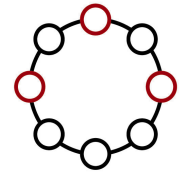
This codeset upgrade is designed to increase the consistency of data entry across all nine jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand.

For researchers, the upgrade will enable:

- A simple search screen to identify cases where drug involvement has been coded.
- A new comprehensive list of all drugs (linked with their appropriate drug classes) that can be selected from a single list.
- The selection of multiple drugs for concurrent searching.
- Searching and filtering by name **or** drug class.

These search features will ensure more efficient and comprehensive searching of cases where drugs were involved in the death.

### *New search screen for identifying cases with drugs coded*



## PHARMACEUTICAL SUBSTANCE FOR HUMAN USE CODESET UPGRADE

Mapping of existing case coding has taken place to transfer existing values to the new Pharmaceutical Codeset. This will enable implementation across the entire data collection.

Please note that this upgrade relates only to the mechanics of data capture and search compatibility for alcohol/drugs contributing to a death. It does not alter NCIS coding guidance as to what and when alcohol/drugs should be coded.

Further details about how to use the new interface will be provided to users closer to the implementation date in September. These will include detailed training guides for coders and a new search guide for researchers.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE BACKLOG ERADICATION PROJECT COMPLETION

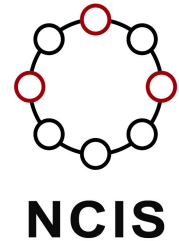
The usefulness of the NCIS is dependent upon the quality and accessibility of data contained in the system. Effective quality assurance processes are therefore crucial in successful data management.

The *Quality Assurance Backlog Eradication Project* commenced in October 2016 and concluded at the end of June, 2018. The project aimed to reduce the number of cases in the NCIS awaiting quality review. We are delighted to announce that all targets have been achieved throughout this 18 month period.

In the 2017-18 financial year, the Quality Team completed reviews for all cases closed by jurisdictions after August 2013. The significant efforts of the Quality Team have reduced the backlog of cases awaiting review from 19,521 on 30 June 2017, to our business as usual target of less than 5,000 cases at 30 June 2018.

The outcomes of this project impact both researchers and coders. For researchers, an increased number of quality assured cases affords greater confidence in the accuracy and consistency of coded data which ensures comprehensive search results. For coders, the reduced backlog has enabled the provision of more timely feedback of current coding practices in each jurisdiction. It also allows the NCIS to examine recurrent coding issues and target training and support material to address these items.

The NCIS would like to thank everyone involved in the project and particularly the court staff in each jurisdiction for their ongoing contribution to the NCIS.



## TRAMPING-RELATED FATALITIES IN NEW ZEALAND

**Research projects utilising the NCIS database cover a variety of topics. The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council have been kind enough to summarise some of the work they have doing using coronial data from the NCIS:**

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council (MSC) have completed their third *Insights* publication, focusing specifically on tramping incidents. Tramping is a uniquely New Zealand term and incorporates any walking activity in the outdoors where the participant intends to be walking for over three hours. As such, the publication covers day walking/hiking through to multi-day tramping in the backcountry of New Zealand.

*A Walk In The Park?* was recently published and is available for viewing on the [MSC's website](#). The publication pulls together ten separate data sources, including the NCIS, to provide a holistic account of injuries, search and rescue operations, and fatalities involving trampers in New Zealand between 1 July 2007 and 30 June 2017.

One of the most revealing insights MSC has developed are the 'National Incident Rates' which pairs participation rate with incident rate. As an example, for every 3,109 trampers, one was involved in a search and rescue in 2017. These rates are intended to be updated by MSC each year as new participation and incident data becomes available. As the rate includes participation, it enables longitudinal examination of incident rate growth or decline and will be a critical component guiding interventions.

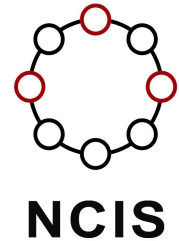
The publication also adds a series of 'deep dives' to answer some specific questions.

- Are New Zealanders or international visitors more commonly involved in search and rescue or fatalities?
- Of those who are injured or killed as the result of a fall, who was involved, where did it happen and why?
- What causation factors led to each of the tramping fatalities? This involved testing the findings in each case against a common set of causation factors, and examining evidence provided by the Coroner for active coronial investigations.

As well as analysing the data at a national level across New Zealand, *A Walk In The Park?* also explores nine 'hotspot' areas of New Zealand. Each hotspot has its own section which explores the idiosyncrasies of the region. These are areas that have either high participation or high incident rates; or both.

The hotspots will become a key focus of MSC's Incident Specific Advisory Groups, that take key insights developed in *A Walk In The Park?* and bring together relevant experts from around the country to better understand the issue at a local level. These groups will then explore what initiatives could be developed to address the issue.

More information on the MSC's *Insights* publications can be located at their website: [mountainsafety.org.nz](http://mountainsafety.org.nz)



## NCIS RESEARCH REPORTS

The NCIS continues to produce a high volume of research reports, particularly for Coroners and their staff. From April to July, 16 coronial reports were provided, and seven data reports produced for external organisations.

Coronial reports have most commonly featured data pertaining to drug and alcohol-related fatalities. Data on opioid-related fatalities (including deaths involving substances such as fentanyl) has been highly sought after. This comes in the wake of mounting public concern over the number of prescription drug-related deaths in Australia. In May 2018, an inquest into the deaths of six persons in Sydney due to opioid use found that the rate of pharmaceutical opioid deaths in Australia now exceeds that of heroin deaths. Such fatalities have also identified the need for real-time prescription monitoring in jurisdictions such as New South Wales and Queensland. NCIS data has been valuable in assisting Coroners and their staff to assess the growing impact of drug-related deaths.

Meanwhile, a variety of other types of fatalities have been reported on by the NCIS. These include: intentional self-harm fatalities at suicide “hot-spots” in New South Wales; home birth-related fatalities; fatal mobility scooter incidents; and assault fatalities in residential care facilities and in domestic settings.

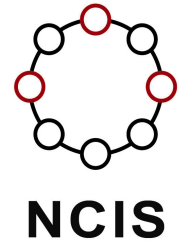
## NCIS THIRD PARTY ACCESS APPLICATIONS

Since March 2018, there have been seven new third party applications to the NCIS. These applications have been received from four different organisation types including academic institutions, research centres, non-profits and government agencies.

The applications span a range of subject areas including Geographic, Intentional Self-Harm, Homicide & Assault, Indigenous, Water Related, Transport & Traffic Related, and Law Enforcement.

The next NCIS closing date for new and renewing applications is Wednesday 5 September. All applications received by this date will be considered at the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC) meeting on Thursday 25 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 (CCOV RC) for consideration before it can be submitted to the JHREC. The next closing date for CCOV RC submissions is Wednesday 22 August.



## FATAL FACTS EDITION 36

The latest edition of *Fatal Facts* was recently released and is now available on the [NCIS website](#). *Fatal Facts* is produced by the NCIS for public circulation. It contains de-identified case summaries and coronial recommendations for cases that were investigated by an Australian or New Zealand Coroner and where the case was closed in a particular timeframe. *Fatal Facts* edition 36 contains summaries of 78 cases that were closed between 1 January and 31st March 2013.

*Fatal Facts* is intended as a tool for sharing information and outcomes about coronial cases from Australia and New Zealand. Case numbers are included so that NCIS users with full access to the database can review the complete details of a case as necessary. Publication of the entire coronial finding is often available from the relevant court website.

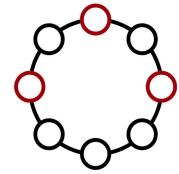
In addition to the newsletter, the NCIS maintains an online search tool, [Fatal Facts Search](#). *Fatal Facts Search* allows users to search by pre-defined case categories to identify all cases relevant to a selected category. A list of the case categories is available within the tool and also on the final page of all editions of *Fatal Facts*. Cases currently included in the search tool are cases closed between 1st May 2007 and 31st December 2012. The NCIS have populated the tool with all past issues of *Fatal Facts*.

## STAFF MOVEMENTS

The NCIS recently farewelled Caitlin Ring, Administration Officer. Following almost two years at the NCIS, Caitlin has accepted a position at the Adult Parole Board. Caitlin will be missed but we wish her all the best in her next professional challenge.

Following Caitlin's departure, Alice Bussey will continue in the role of Administration Officer. Alice has been in this role since January 2018, whilst Caitlin was seconded to the Crime Statistics Agency.

In addition, throughout August and September the NCIS will host two Health Information Management students from La Trobe University. During their placements, the students will complete a variety of internal projects and work closely with the Quality Team.



### NCIS STATISTICS

#### Case Closure and Document Attachment Rates for all Australian Jurisdictions and New Zealand Cases, 2000-2017

NCIS case closure rates by jurisdiction at 2 July 2018

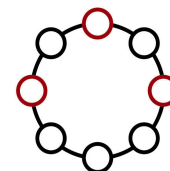
Jurisdiction	% Cases Closed
ACT	96.0%
NSW	88.4%
NT	95.1%
QLD	91.5%
SA	94.7%
TAS	93.4%
VIC	83.9%
WA	93.5%
NZ*	88.5%

\* The NCIS contains only 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.

NCIS case document attachment by jurisdiction at 2 July 2018

Jurisdiction	Autopsy	Finding	Toxicology	Police
ACT	93%	98%	75%	98%
NSW	75%	62%	66%	55%
NT	93%	98%	74%	97%
QLD	68%	66%	42%	96%
SA	0%	99%	25%	100%
TAS	84%	91%	91%	98%
VIC	95%	92%	98%	87%
WA	79%	98%	91%	100%
NZ	98%	98%	81%	98%

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

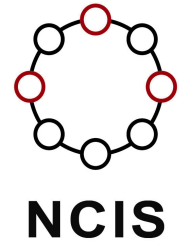


### NCIS DATA REFERENCES

Recent publications that have referenced data from the NCIS include:

- Aitken, G., Demosthenous, A., Bugeja, L., Willoughby, M., Young, C. & Ibrahim, J. E. (2018). "Coroners' recommendations for prevention of resident deaths in aged care: 'The role of primary care providers'". *Australian Journal of General Practice*, 47(5), pp. 314-317. <<https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=587602139634058;res=IELHEA>>
- Armstrong, G., Spittal, M. J. & Jorm, F. A. (2018) "Are we underestimating the suicide rate of middle and older-aged Indigenous Australians? An interaction between 'unknown' Indigenous status and age". *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. Doi: 10.1111/1753-6405.12795/.
- Charters, K. E., Gabbe, B. J. & Mitra, B. (2018). "Pedestrian traffic injury in Victoria, Australia". *Injury*, 49 (2), pp. 256-260. <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.injury.2017.12.014>>
- Darke, S., Kaye, S., Duflou, J. & Lippid, J. (2018). "Completed suicide among methamphetamine users: A national study". *Suicide Life Threatening Behaviour*. Doi: 10.1111/sltv.12442.
- Freemantle, J. & Ellis, L. (2018). "An Australian perspective". *SIDS: Sudden infant and early childhood death: The part, the present and the future*, pp. 349-375. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.20851/sid>>
- Mullins, R. J., Wainstein, B. K., Barnes, E. H. & Campbell, D. E. (2018). "Angioedema in Australia: hospital admission rates and fatalities, 2000-2013". *The Medical Journal of Australia*. Doi: 10.5694/mja17.00404
- Murphy, B.J., Bugeja, L.C., Pilgrim, J.L., & Ibrahim, J.E. (2018). "Suicide among nursing home residents in Australia: A national population-based retrospective analysis of medico-legal death investigation information". *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 33, pp. 786–796. Doi: 10.1002/gps.4862.
- Murphy, B., Kennedy, B., Martin, C., Bugeja, L., Willoughby, M. & Ibrahim, J. E. (2018) "Health and care related risk factors for suicide among nursing home residents: A data linkage study". *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*. Doi: 10.1111/sltb.12465.
- Peden, A. E., Franklin, R. C. & Leggat, A. P. (2018). "Exploring visitation at rivers to understand drowning risk". *Injury Prev*, Epub ahead of print: 26 June 2018. Doi: 10.1136/injuryprev-2018-042819.
- Roxburgh, A., Pilgrim, J. L., Hall, W. D., Burns, L. & Degenhardt, L. (2018) "Accurate identification of opioid overdose deaths using coronial data". *Forensic Science International*, 287, pp. 40-46. <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forsciint.2018.03.032>>
- Royal Auto. (2018). "Driveway Deaths". *RoyalAuto*, June, 86 (5), p. 80.
- Woolford, M. H., Bugeja, L., Weller, C., Johnson, M. Chong, D. & Ibrahim, J. E. (2018) "Unexplained absence resulting in deaths of nursing home residents in Australia - A 13-year retrospective study". *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, pp. 1-8. <<https://doi.org/10.1002/gps.4896>>





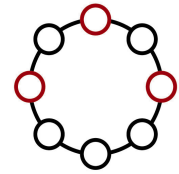
## NCIS DATA REFERENCES

Recent Government reports that have referenced data from the NCIS include:

- Domestic Violence Death Review Team. (2018). *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network*. <<http://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/find/publications/australian+domestic+and+family+violence+death+review+network>> (Retrieved 6 June 2018)

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

- Jones, E. (2018). "Suicide prevention program Question Persuade Refer rolls out for country SA". <<http://www.news.com.au/national/south-australia/suicide-prevention-program-question-persuade-refer-rolls-out-for-country-sa/news-story/52b93a163b8be3e31f8678613065be06>> (Retrieved 4 May 2018).
- Kolovos, B. (2018). "Vic 'Big Blue' excavator for mental health". <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/vic-big-blue-excavator-for-mental-health/news-story/6a31b1648ff6f09980194fff85ecef96>> (Retrieved 16 May 2018).
- McGowan, M. (2018). "Inquiry into opiate deaths to hear from pill-testing experts". <<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/may/07/inquiry-into-opiate-deaths-to-hear-from-pill-testing-experts>> (Retrieved 8 May 2018).
- McGowan, M. (2018). "Australian opioid inquest told pensioners selling fentanyl on black market". <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/may/08/australian-opioid-inquest-told-pensioners-selling-fentanyl-on-black-market>> (Retrieved 10 May 2018).
- McGowan, M. (2018). "'He was gone': fentanyl and the opioid deaths destroying Australian families". <<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/may/13/he-was-gone-fentanyl-and-the-opioid-deaths-destroying-australian-families>> (Retrieved 14 May 2018).
- National Indigenous Times. (2018). "Suicide rates among the elderly may be skewed". <<https://nit.com.au/suicide-rates-among-elderly-may-be-skewed/>> (Retrieved 25 June 2018).



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### FEEDBACK

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

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