

DATA QUALITY STATEMENT - IDENTIFICATION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE ON THE NCIS

The NCIS contains two fields which indicate whether a deceased identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

These are:

- *Indigenous origin (Coronial)* - part of the NCIS core data set provided by the Coroners Courts in each Australian jurisdiction.
- *Indigenous status (BDM)* - provided by the Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) registries in each Australian jurisdiction.

Why are there two data sources for indigenous identification?

Collecting two data sources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification (indigenous identification) in the NCIS recognises the importance of this variable for death and injury prevention work.

It acknowledges the difficulty of collecting comprehensive and accurate data about indigenous identification in administrative data sets.¹ Two data sources provide greater coverage and a reduced reliance on one administrative process to capture this characteristic.

BDM registry data will supplement the gaps that exist in the collection of indigenous identification through the coronial process.² This is particularly relevant for jurisdictions with a high proportion of "Unlikely to be Known" values in the *Indigenous origin (Coronial)* field.³

¹ "Despite improvements in recent years, there are continuing problems with the under-identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in many health-related data collections" pg. 1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010. *National best practice guidelines for collecting Indigenous status in health data sets*. Cat. no. IHW 29. Canberra: AIHW.

² A comparison of indigenous identification data from NCIS and BDM for 2006-2015 indicated there was a BDM indigenous value in 99% of instances where the coronial value was *Unlikely to be known*.

³ An analysis of NCIS data for deaths reported between 2006-2015 found South Australia and Victoria had an *Unlikely to be known* value for the Indigenous Origin (Coronial) in 71% and 41% of closed cases respectively.

Why have the two values not been combined?

The NCIS is primarily a collection of data from the Coroners Courts about reportable deaths. It is therefore important the indigenous origin of the deceased as recorded by the Court remains reflected in the NCIS.

Displaying the two data sources separately also allows for some possible indications to be drawn as to the accuracy of a value. If both sources note the deceased was of the same indigenous background, there should be a reasonable level of confidence in the accuracy of this data as it was obtained through separate processes.

What is the level of consistency between the data sources?

A comparison of coronial and BDM registry indigenous identification data for across 2006-2015 found consistent values in 78 per cent of instances. This rose to 98 per cent when both data sets contained a meaningful value.⁴

What happens when the data is inconsistent?

There will be a small proportion of cases where the data contained in the coronial and BDM registry data sets are inconsistent. For example, coronial data indicates the deceased was *Aboriginal* yet the BDM data states the deceased was *Non indigenous*.

The NCIS Unit does not resolve these inconsistencies as there is no way to determine which data source comprises the "correct" value. An exception may occur if the NCIS value appears to be coded incorrectly based on the attached documentation.⁵

A comparison of coronial and BDM registry indigenous identification data for across 2006-2015 found inconsistencies in only two per cent of cases. In these instances NCIS users have the option to design their own rules surrounding an overall determination of indigenous identification.⁶

⁴ A meaningful value is defined as one in which the value is something other than *not stated, still enquiring, unlikely to be known or blank*.

⁵ This scenario would involve coronial documentation attached to the NCIS clearly stating a deceased was from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, yet the *Indigenous origin* (Coronial) field on the NCIS does not reflect this. Users should advise the NCIS of such an issue using the data issue flag at the top right hand corner of a case record.

⁶ This may involve a weighting of indigenous identification over non-identification, a "most frequent" rule (if combining with other datasets), or recoding of the case to *unknown*.

Table 1. Comparison of coronial and BDM registry data sources for indigenous identification

	Indigenous origin (Coronial)	Indigenous status (BDM)
Definition	A measure of whether the person identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders descent or origin.	Was the deceased of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin? ⁷
Source organisation	Coroners Court in each Australian jurisdiction	Births, Deaths and Marriages registries in each Australian jurisdiction
Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal not TSI • Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander • Neither Aboriginal nor TSI • Torres Strait Islander • Still enquiring • Unlikely to be known 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal • Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander • Non Indigenous • Torres Strait Islander • Not stated
Coverage	All Australian States and Territories	All Australian States and Territories
Time span	From start of the NCIS data collection (deaths reported from July 2000 for all Australian jurisdictions except Queensland which commenced Jan 2001)	For deaths registered with BDM registries from 2006 onwards
Collection method	Collected during the death investigation process. Could be collected via: 1) the police report of death —several jurisdictions have a field to indicate <i>Indigenous origin</i> on	The Death Registration application form (DRF) and/or the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD).

⁷ Based on the language used on death registration forms and medical cause of death certificates in the states/territories of Australia.

	<p>the police report of death to a Coroner, or it could be mentioned in the descriptive summary</p> <p>2) medical records - hospital records or autopsy reports may mention indigenous origin of a deceased <i>“The body was that of a middle aged Aboriginal female of about stated age.”</i></p> <p>3) statements made to the Coroner through police briefs, witness statements or next of kin communications.</p>	<p>The DRF is completed by the deceased’s senior next of kin and submitted to the BDM registry via the funeral director. NSW and Victorian registries use the DRF exclusively to determine indigenous status.</p> <p>Other BDM registries use the MCCD to help determine indigenous status.⁸ The MCCD is completed by the medical practitioner certifying the death and contains an option to indicate indigenous status.</p> <p>If the indigenous status reported in the DRF does not agree with that in the MCCD, preference will be given to the identification of the individual as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.</p>
Method of provision to the NCIS	Data entered into local court systems or NCIS directly by coronial clerks. Selection of value from drop-down options.	Via the Cause of Death Unit Record File (COD URF) provided by the Australian Coordinating Registry (ACR).
Frequency of Provision	Nightly	Annually (as part of Cause of Death Unit Record File release)
Completeness (national level)	In a 10 year sample of coronial cases on the NCIS (2006-2015 closed cases) there were approximately 23% of cases which had an <i>unlikely to be known</i> value for <i>Indigenous origin</i> .	In a 10 year sample of BDM registry data (2006-2015), there were approximately 2% of cases which had a <i>not stated</i> value for <i>Indigenous status</i> .

⁸ South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory started using the indigenous status data on the MCCD from 2007. Queensland started using it from 2015.

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<p>Completeness (jurisdictional level).</p>	<p>In a 10 year sample of coronial cases on the NCIS (2006-2015 closed cases) the proportion of cases with <i>unlikely to be known</i> for <i>Indigenous origin</i> was as follows:</p> <p>NSW- 8% VIC-41% QLD-5% SA-71% WA-0% TAS-1% NT-0% ACT-1%</p>	<p>In a 10 year sample of BDM registry data (2006-2015), the proportion of cases with <i>not stated</i> for <i>Indigenous status</i> was as follows:</p> <p>NSW- 1% VIC-0% QLD-3% SA-2% WA-5% TAS-0% NT-1% ACT-4%</p>
<p>Accuracy</p>	<p>In addition to the known issues with propensity to identify as indigenous in life, collecting indigenous identification in death has the added complications of the fact a person has recently died. A next of kin or witnesses at the scene may be traumatised, not know the information, or have hesitation about answering police questions surrounding the deceased in the immediate aftermath of a fatality. The procedure a police officer or other party undertakes to determine the indigenous origin of a deceased is unknown and may differ in each case.</p> <p>The possibility of missing a positive indigenous identification at the point of coding may be increased if the indigenous origin information is referenced in a non-standard location within the coronial file (such as in the text of an autopsy report or coronial</p>	<p>Sourced from Explanatory data item 63 and 64, Causes of Death Australia, 2017 (Australian Bureau of Statistics).</p> <p><i>“There are several data collection forms on which people are asked to state whether they are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. Due to a number of factors, the results are not always consistent. The likelihood that a person will identify, or be identified, as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person on a specific form is known as their propensity to identify.</i></p> <p><i>Propensity to identify as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person is determined by a range of factors, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>how the information is collected (e.g. census, survey, or administrative</i>

	<p>finding rather than in a specific field in the police notification of death form).</p>	<p><i>data);</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>who provides the information (e.g. the person in question, a relative, a health professional, or an official);</i> ▪ <i>the perception of why the information is required, and how it will be used;</i> ▪ <i>educational programs about identifying as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person; and</i> ▪ <i>cultural aspects and feelings associated with identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian.”</i> <p>It is understood comparison/validation of indigenous status provided at death with indigenous status provided at other events for that same person (births, marriages) does not presently occur at BDM registries.</p>
<p>Quality Assurance Processes</p>	<p>The NCIS Unit reviews this field as part of its quality assurance program for cases which meet the QA criteria.⁹</p> <p>During the quality assurance program the indigenous origin value is checked to ensure it accurately represents the information contained within the attached coronial reports.</p>	<p>No quality assurance of the <i>Indigenous status</i> field as provided by the BDM registries is undertaken by the NCIS Unit.</p>

⁹ Only cases which have a non-natural case type (or are natural deaths with specific terms in the medical cause of death) are manually reviewed through the NCIS quality assurance program.