NATIONAL CORONIAL INFORMATION SYSTEM



NCIS Annual report

2021-22



Acknowledgment of country

The NCIS Unit acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

National Coronial Information System

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Authorisation

This report was prepared by the National Coronial Information System (NCIS) Unit and approved by the NCIS Board of Management.

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Acknowledgments

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am pleased to present the National Coronial Information System Annual report 2021-22.

This year has proven to be another productive time for the NCIS. There has been continued focus on showcasing our data's value through training and publications. We have explored opportunities to enhance the data collection, improve how we manage projects, and expand administrative reporting to participating jurisdictions. This work has been crucial to inform the NCIS' new strategic plan due for release in 2022-23.

As a voluntary collaboration between the Australian States and Territories and New Zealand, the NCIS is unique at both a national and international level. I wholeheartedly thank the Australian and New Zealand State and Chief Coroners for their continued support and contributions to the NCIS. Managing the data collection and providing services to coroners, death investigators researchers, and the broader community would not be possible without financial support of the Australian and New Zealand justice departments and select Australia Commonwealth agencies. I thank these agencies for their continued support.

NCIS continues to work with partners to enrich the NCIS and provide greater value to death investigators and researchers. Supplementary data drawn from data custodians outside the coronial system enhances coronial information in the NCIS data collection. Thank you to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Health New Zealand, Safe Work Australia and the Australian Births, Deaths and Marriages registries for their continued support and data provision.

The NCIS Unit supports initiatives that involve the improved standardisation of materials associated with the coronial investigation of death. The Australian Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (RCDVS) is focused on the identification of systemic problems and solutions to suicide and suicidality among serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members. Responses to RCDVS requests for information featured heavily in the NCIS' work program throughout the second half of the year.

The NCIS remains in a healthy financial position with the NCIS Trust balance being \$669,357 as at 30 June 2022. The decrease of \$93,576 from the previous closing balance primarily driven by a decrease in user pays compared to the previous year, which had been higher than normal.

Productivity and service delivery by the NCIS Unit remained high through the 2021-22, with staff continuing to work from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We welcomed a new Business Support Officer in February 2022 and continued our longstanding internship program hosting two students throughout the year.

Fiona Dowsley

Director, National Coronial Information System

2021-22 AT A GLANCE

Data collection



+

27,965

cases added to the NCIS



21,343

cases closed in the NCIS



15,613

cases quality assured

Sers



294 active approved death investigators



98

active third party research projects

Reports



44

reports prepared for coroners



23

reports prepared for external clients

Publications



8

Fact sheets released



46

Fatal facts case summaries published

raining



7
General information sessions delivered



4

Database introduction sessions delivered

ABOUT US

The National Coronial Information System (NCIS) is a data repository containing information on deaths reported to a coroner in Australia and New Zealand. It is an essential data tool for both coroners and researchers to obtain nationally standardised information about the causes of preventable death and injury.

As a voluntary collaboration between the Australian states and territories, and New Zealand, the NCIS is unique at both a national and international level. The NCIS is leading the way in the provision of data for evidence-based mortality research, given its comprehensive demographic data, medical cause of death and searchable medicolegal documentation.

History

The NCIS was established in 2000 to provide Australia-wide infrastructure to support the collection and management of coronial data. Previously, coronial data were held separately within each jurisdiction, often in paper files and without the ability to easily search, share or access information securely or across jurisdictions. Establishing the NCIS addressed these information access barriers.

Data collection

The collection contains data on *reportable deaths* only. A reportable death is generally a death that: is unexpected or unexplained; is the result of an accident or injury; occurs in care or custody; is healthcare related; or is a case of unknown identity. The Coroners Act within each jurisdiction determines what constitutes a *reportable death* that must be investigated by a coroner.

The NCIS core data set was agreed upon by all participating jurisdictions at the establishment of the NCIS. The NCIS Unit monitors the provision of information from coroners courts against the core data set.

Data collection for all Australian states and territories commenced on 1 July 2000, except Queensland which commenced on 1 January 2001. The collection of New Zealand data commenced on 1 July 2007. Data collection for each participating jurisdiction remains ongoing.

The NCIS holds 470,000 cases that have been recorded in the system since its establishment. The database contains coded and non-coded data including demographic information about the deceased, contextual information about the nature of the fatality, full-text copies of coronial findings, autopsy and toxicology reports, and police notification of death reports.

Information contained in the NCIS is prepared by, and belongs to, the respective Coroners Court from each of the participating jurisdictions. While the NCIS Unit hosts data and provides other services to the coroners courts of each participating jurisdiction, it does not form part of any coroners court.

Data access

The database is available to coroners to assist investigations and appropriate access is available on application for eligible groups who require coronial data for research or monitoring projects.

The NCIS Unit provides a report service to coroners and their staff to support coronial investigations and assist in case identification.

Data reports presenting aggregate, statistical data can be requested by third parties including researchers, organisations and the media. Release of these reports is subject to the approval of the relevant State or Chief Coroner and the content of the reports may be made public if approved.

The NCIS publishes a series of fact sheets that are freely available on our website. Fact sheets include statistical information on deaths reported to a coroner and cover specific topics of public interest.

Fatal facts is a unique product created by the NCIS Unit providing centralised access to coronial recommendations from across all Australian states and territories. It contains de-identified case summaries about cases closed by a coroner from 2000 where recommendations have been made.



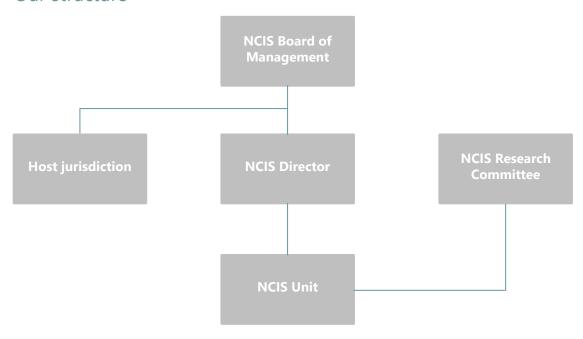
The NCIS database has been a valuable research tool in my inquiries, especially those in which recommendations were potentially warranted. The detailed coding of cases and refined search fields enable targeted searches for relevant cases.

The NCIS team always responds promptly and helpfully to my queries. I have recently been assisted by peer reviewed research based upon data collected and analysed by NCIS.

Thank you for the important service NCIS provides in making coronial findings accessible and searchable.

Coroner Wrigley, New Zealand

Our structure



NCIS Board of Management

The NCIS Board of Management ensures the effective management of funds, provides strategic direction and ensures all legal and financial responsibilities are met in line with the requirements set out in the NCIS Memorandum of Understanding.

The Board comprises:

- One coronial representative
- One public health representative nominated by the Australian Government Department of Health
- One representative nominated from the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety as the NCIS' host jurisdiction
- One larger jurisdictions representative (Queensland, New South Wales and New Zealand)
- One smaller jurisdictions representative (Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory).

Host jurisdiction

The NCIS is hosted by the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety as an independent unit.

NCIS Unit

The NCIS Unit's function is to develop and maintain a high-quality information service for coroners, policymakers and researchers to benefit the Australian community by contributing to a reduction in preventable death and injury.

NCIS Research Committee

The NCIS Research Committee (NRC) reviews all applications from third party researchers seeking direct access to Australian data in the NCIS to assess whether the application is suitable for referral to the ethics committee.

The NRC comprises:

- An Australian state or chief coroner (or their delegate) on a rotating basis
- NCIS Manager
- NCIS Access Officer

Ethics committees

The NCIS utilises the Justice Human and Research Ethics Committee (JHREC) convened by the Secretary of the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety for third party research projects seeking access to Australian data.

Third party research applications seeking access to Western Australian data are also considered by the Western Australian Coronial Ethics Committee (WACEC).

Read more about the NCIS

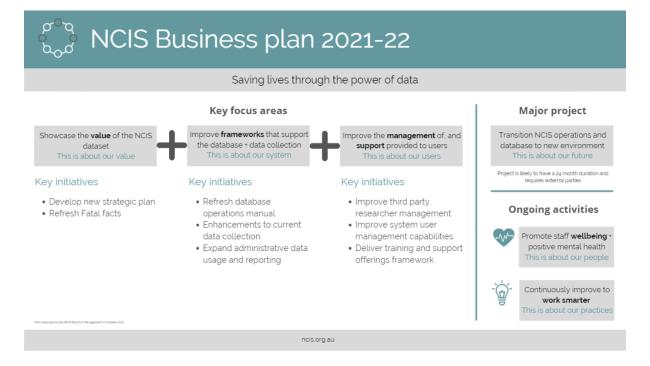
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Provision of comprehensive coronial data to those who need it. *This is our mission*Saving lives through the power of data. *This is our vision*

The NCIS Strategic Plan 2017-2021, approved by the Board of Management, outlined four strategic goals to support our mission and vision:

- Ensure efficient and comprehensive acquisition of data
- Ensure data quality is of the highest possible standard
- Provision of quality coronial data to stakeholders
- Assurance of system continuity and security

Progress has been made against the strategic goals through the 2021-22 business plan:



Key focus areas

Key achievements against the focus areas included:

Showcase the value of the NCIS dataset This is about our value					
Activity	Aim	Key outcomes delivered	Comments		
Develop new strategic plan	Shape the future of the NCIS through the	Draft strategic plan developed	The NCIS Strategic plan 2022-26 has been		

Showcase the value of the NCIS dataset This is about our value					
Activity	Aim	Aim Key outcomes delivered			
	development a new strategic plan to define agreed goals and priorities		submitted to the NCIS Board of Management and is scheduled for release in late 2022		
Refresh Fatal facts	Review, prioritise and implement recommendations from the 2020-21 business activity 'undertake fatal facts review' to enhance usability and tool functionality	 Tool updated to enhance NCIS Unit and user usability Category tags revised Existing case summaries updated to reflect current NCIS language and revised category tags 	Delivery of this work was impacted by unexpected security work required to be applied to the online search tool. Implementation of new category tags and refreshed case summaries scheduled for completion in late 2022		

Improve	Improve frameworks that support the database + data collection. This is about our system					
Activity	Aim	Key outcomes delivered	Comments			
Refresh database operations manual	Compilation, standardisation, and creation of materials that support the technical operation of the NCIS database	 Manual architecture designed Phase 1 of content created 	The manual is intended to be a living document. Work will continue to review and refresh existing information, and create new content as required.			
Enhancements to current data collection	Progress work to build on business plan activities completed during 2020-21, addressing known issues of the data collection and identifying unknown issues	 Two sets of specifications Reviewed 3963 cases closed pre-2004 against current coding rules Scoping report detailing proposed priority areas of focus 	The technical specifications are expected to be implemented in 2023. Work is continuing to review pre-2004 cases. Recommendations in the scoping report will be assessed against the new NCIS Strategic plan when approved			

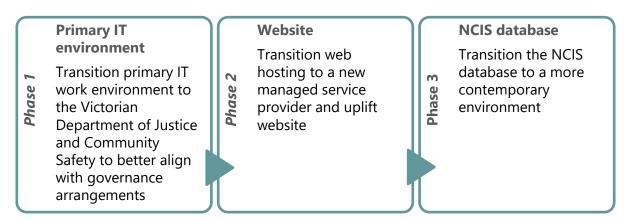
Improve	Improve frameworks that support the database + data collection. This is about our system						
Activity	Aim	Key outcomes delivered	Comments				
Expand administrative data and reporting	Improve administrative capability and expand reporting activities to meet NCIS Unit and stakeholder needs	 Review of existing internal reporting and scoping of the desired reporting Recommendations report Discontinued internal reports that no longer support internal business needs 	Recommendations will be delivered during 2022-23. Consultation with stakeholders will be undertaken to determine further requirements				

Improve the management of, and support provided to users This is about our users					
Activity	Aim	Key outcomes delivered	Comments		
Improve third party researcher management	A broad review of access management function to identify known and unknown problems within the context of all services and identify key areas for improvement	 Review of access management function across NCIS operations Roadmap developed Implemented two improvement activities NCIS Board of Management approval for increased staffing resources 	Work will continue throughout 2022-23 to deliver the roadmap of planned activities. Recruitment for a new position to be undertaken in late 2022		
Improve system user management capabilities	Identify needs surrounding the organisation, access and display of user information in the NCIS to enable improved user management functionality	Technical specifications developed	Delivery of this work was impacted by unexpected, competing priorities requiring the same resources required to implement the specifications. System changes will be implemented by late 2022.		

Improve the management of, and support provided to users This is about our users						
Activity	Aim	Key outcomes delivered	Comments			
Deliver training and support offerings framework	Deliver the Training + support offerings outcome that training and support is available to all approved NCIS users to enable effective use of the system.	 Audit of existing offerings Refresh work commenced Quarterly general information sessions plus three targeted audience sessions New database introduction session developed and delivered on a scheduled basis 	Delivery of this work was impacted by resource availability due to staffing changes and other priorities Work is continuing to develop new offerings in the Getting started, Online resources and NCIS Classroom streams to better support NCIS users			

Major project

This work aims to modernise our environment and address risks through three key phases:



Phase one was completed in June 2022. The NCIS Unit thanks staff from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety and Cenitex for their involvement in delivering this significant piece of work.

Phase two is planned for 2022-23.

Phase three is the largest component of this project with work expected to commence in early 2023.

Ongoing activities



We are committed to supporting staff wellbeing and providing a safe workplace. Activities include access to employee wellbeing and support services and resources including accredited Mental Health First Aiders, regular check-ins and debriefs, and social activities.



A continuous improvement culture means we make incremental changes to enhance our practices and processes to generate better value. Examples include knowledge management improvements, identifying and removing superfluous activities, and updating our language.

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO DEFENCE AND VETERAN SUICIDE

The Australian Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (RCDVS) was established in 2021 for the issue of Letters Patent by the Governor-General His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd). In accordance with its terms of reference, the RCDVS will focus on the identification of systemic problems and solutions to suicide and suicidality among serving and ex-serving ADF members. The RCDVS is scheduled to publish an interim report (August 2022), a special report (2023) and a final report (June 2024).

To date, the NCIS Unit has supported the RCDVS' work through three key activities:

Hearings

RCDVS is conducting a series of hearings across Australia to hear evidence for the purpose of the inquiry. Day three of Hearing block C (9 March 2022) had a strong focus on data custodians. The NCIS Director (Ms Dowsley) and NCIS Manager (Ms Watson) were summonsed to appear and provided oral evidence. Ms Dowsley and Ms Watson's testimony is available on pages 98-133 of the transcript from Hearing Block 3 – Day 3 – 9 March 2022. A series of 11 NCIS documents sourced from the NCIS website were tendered as evidence by RCDVS' Counsel Assisting.

Statistical research

RCDVS intends to undertake a statistical data research project to interrogate the prevalence of suicide amongst ADF members and veterans and consider risk and preventative factors. This will provide research findings to inform RCDVS deliberations. NCIS data is considered by RCDVS to be essential to the project. The NCIS Unit produced and provided two data extracts in March 2022 to the RCDVS in response to a *Notice to produce and give information* (NTP-VJC-001) issued pursuant to ss2(3A) and (3C) of the *Royal Commissions Act 1902* (Cth) (RC Act) to support the statistical data research project.

Exploring the data landscape

A *Notice to give information* (NTG-VJC-001) was issued to the NCIS Unit pursuant to ss2(3A) and (3C) of the RC Act to further inform the RCDVS' work. Responding to NTG-VJC-001 in April 2022 provided an opportunity to explain the NCIS' scope, role and benefits to the RCDVS. NTG-VJC-001 included a series of 29 questions across six sections: general; information recorded in the NCIS database; methodology; data quality, reliability, and limitations; opportunities for data improvement; and other relevant matters. Our response was tendered into evidence in chambers and is available on the RCDVS website.

OPERATIONAL REPORT

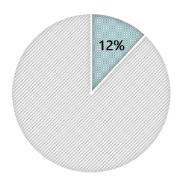
Data contained in the NCIS is provided by each coronial court in Australia and New Zealand. The NCIS Unit ensures the data received from the coronial courts is quality assured and nationally consistent.

Supplementary data is also provided by external organisations and updated annually including:

- ICD-10 coding provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Health New Zealand. All deaths occurring in Australia and New Zealand are coded in accordance with the International Classification of Death Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes
- Work-related fatality supplementary data including occupation, industry and injury type is provided by Safe Work Australia. There is no equivalent for New Zealand data
- Data about the indigenous status and birthplace of individuals is provided by each state or territory; Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) registry. This data originates from the death registration process and/or medical certificate cause of death.

Data collection

Each year the total number of cases contained in the NCIS increases, subsequently growing the value of the data to death investigators and researchers.



■ Reportable deaths ■ Deaths

The number of deaths reported to an Australian coroner has remained relatively constant over the last five years, accounting for approximately 12 per cent of all deaths.¹

There were 27,965 new cases added to the NCIS during 2021-22 bringing the total number of cases contained in the NCIS at 30 June 2022 to 469,967.

Table 1. Total number of cases contained in the NCIS by financial year²

Financial year	New cases added	Total cases
2000–2001	13,085	13,093

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2020, October 23). *Causes of Death, Australia methodology*. https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/causes-death-australia-methodology/2019

² Values throughout the table change each year as a result of cases being added and deleted by the court and NCIS Unit.

Financial year	New cases added	Total cases
2001–2002	17,464	30,557
2002–2003	21,544	52,101
2003–2004	18,850	70,951
2004–2005	18,884	89,835
2005–2006	19,650	109,485
2006–2007	17,461	126,946
2007–2008	17,612	144,558
2008–2009	19,382	163,940
2009–2010	18,120	182,060
2010–2011	18,077	200,137
2011–2012	17,475	217,612
2012–2013	30,361	247,973
2013–2014	24,662	272,635
2014–2015	24,903	297,538
2015–2016	24,823	322,361
2016–2017	23,621	345,982
2017–2018	23,676	369,658
2018–2019	24,159	393,817
2019–2020	23,771 417,588	
2020–2021	24,414	442,002
2021–2022	27,965	469,967

Table 2. Total number of cases closed in the NCIS by jurisdiction and financial year (last five financial years)

Jurisdiction	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22³
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	263	286	356	161	6
New South Wales (NSW)	4,313	5,733	7,257	4,729	4,431
Northern Territory (NT)	227	335	340	270	291

³ Case closure rates are dependent on resourcing availability within courts to complete NCIS data entry and coding in a timely manner. The NCIS Unit provides support to courts where possible.

Jurisdiction	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 ³
Queensland (QLD)	2,329	2,524	2,039	1,355	855
South Australia (SA)	2,801	2,700	2,419	2,808	2,680
Tasmania (TAS)	578	483	677	623	750
Victoria (VIC)	5,525	3,282	8,042	3,532	7,068
Western Australia (WA)	2,329	2,296	2,833	2,301	2,333
New Zealand (NZ)	3,009	3,189	2,928	3,357	2,929
Total	21,374	20,828	26,891	19,136	21,343

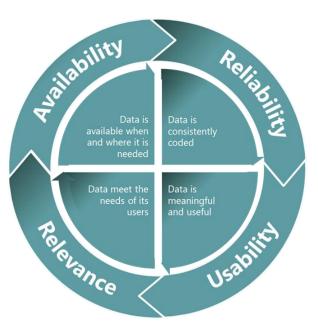
Table 3. Total number of closed cases in the NCIS by jurisdiction and case type during 2021-22

Jurisdiction	Death due to natural cause(s)	Death due to external cause(s)	Body not recovered	Unlikely to be known	Total closed cases
ACT	3	1	0	2	6
NSW	2,663	1,726	10	22	4,431
NT	164	121	1	5	291
QLD	157	667	12	19	855
SA	1,737	864	0	79	2,680
TAS	382	354	6	8	750
VIC	3,203	3,730	5	130	7,068
WA	1,214	1,065	16	38	2,333
NZ	1,734	1,145	7	43	2,929
Total	11,257	9,683	57	346	21,343

View the latest cases closure and document attachment statistics

Quality assurance

The NCIS is committed to providing high quality and fit-for-purpose data. Our quality program encompasses a range of activities to maintain the highest possible standards of data quality and consistency.



Read more about our Quality assurance program

The NCIS Unit undertakes manual quality assurance on all eligible cases. To be included in a quality review a case must meet at least one of the following criteria:

Case type – completion is non-natural death [death due to external cause(s), body not recovered or unlikely to be known]

Case type – completion is death due to natural cause(s) and

- o at least one mechanism/object screen is coded
- o Cause of death field contains one of the nominated keywords or
- o Coroners Recommendation/warning field is recommendations made/warning made

Table 4. Total number of cases quality assured by jurisdiction and financial year (last five financial years)

Jurisdiction	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
ACT	366	122	441	233	112
NSW	4,142	11,226	2,482	5,449	3,219
NT	473	201	136	355	256
QLD	2,951	1,708	1,396	2,005	1,597
SA	2,134	1,145	1,027	1,904	1,449
TAS	678	306	266	553	729

Jurisdiction	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
VIC	11,320	2,531	3,816	4,035	4,885
WA	2,766	1,468	3,375	1,926	1,764
NZ	6,717	1,708	717	2,260	1,602
Total	31,547	20,409	13,656	18,720	15,613

Table 5. Total number of closed cases awaiting quality assurance review by jurisdiction and financial year

Jurisdiction	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-224
ACT	31	81	143	7	2
NSW	901	876	3213	416	332
NT	35	55	162	22	10
QLD	714	529	1112	249	0
SA	435	352	795	185	238
TAS	115	88	270	127	12
VIC	1511	1291	3518	217	1,014
WA	600	489	1002	293	171
NZ	863	225	616	73	117
Total	5205	3986	10,831	1,589	1,896

⁴ NCIS Unit quality assurance review of cases is up to date (quality review undertaken within three months of case closure) with the figures for 2021-22 representing cases closed in May and June 2022 due to be quality reviewed in July 2022.

NCIS data access

NCIS direct access is available to the following groups:



Death investigators are individuals who directly assist with the investigation of deaths reported to a coroner.⁵ They include coroners, coronial clerks, forensic pathologists and police assisting a coroner. Death investigators may utilise the NCIS in the investigation process to review circumstances and outcomes in similar cases occurring in any jurisdiction in Australia and New Zealand.



Third party users include researchers, universities, policymakers or government departments with a bona fide involvement in monitoring and preventing injury and death in the community. Ethical approval for research projects is required for access to the NCIS.



Data on-provision agencies are approved to on-provide NCIS data under certain conditions. Data on-provision agencies may be current approved third-party researchers or may apply as new agencies for the sole purpose of data on-provision. They must have assessment processes in place to ensure that NCIS sourced data remains secure and will only be on-provided to receiving agencies for research or statistical purpose.

Approved death investigators



The NCIS was very handy for our office when we did a full review of all our long-term missing persons and unidentified human remains. We were able to find all the bits of information that we were missing such as coronial findings etc.

Richard Gozman, Missing Persons Registry – NSW Police Force

There were 83 new death investigators approved for NCIS access in 2021-22. There are active death investigator users in every jurisdiction represented in the NCIS, including staff at the coroners courts.

Table 6. Total number of active death investigators by jurisdiction and financial year⁶

Jurisdiction	2020-21	2021-22	
ACT	7	5	
NSW	169	174	

⁵ Death investigators undertaking research are required to apply as a third party user.

⁶ Active death investigators are defined as those who used their NCIS account at least once during the financial year. Statistics prior to 2020-21 are unavailable.

Jurisdiction	2020-21	2021-22
NT	4	4
QLD	7	8
SA	2	2
TAS	3	2
VIC	85	81
WA	7	9
NZ	24	19
Total	308	304

Approved third party research projects



NCIS is a national treasure for researchers. In my field of drugrelated deaths, it enables national studies on existing and emerging harms, which is not feasible in other countries. NCIS is easy to navigate, well-maintained, and the support is uniformly excellent.

Professor Shane Darke, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales

There were 98 active third party research projects utilising NCIS data as at 30 June 2022. Of these, 14 were new projects that commenced in the 2021-22 financial year. There were 20 projects completed and four renewed in the same period.

The largest proportion of projects as at 30 June 2022 were from academic institutions (53%), followed by government agencies (23%). Major focus areas across all active projects included intentional self-harm, drowning and water and pharmaceutical substances.

Five projects being undertaken by NCIS core funders continued to access and utilise NCIS data throughout 2021-22:

- Australian Institute of Criminology (two projects): The National Homicide Monitoring Program and National Deaths in Custody Program
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission: Monitoring consumer product related deaths nationally
- Safe Work Australia (two projects): Enumeration and analysis of work-related fatalities in Australia and Improving Safe Work Australia's understanding of the incidence and causes of work-related diseases in Australia

Table 7. Total number of approved new and renewed third party projects for access to NCIS by financial year

Projects	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
New ⁷	16	17	15	22	14
Renewed	16	23	8	1	4
Completed	23	22	15	13	20
Active projects at end of financial year	93	91	89	104	98

The ethics approval period changed from three to five years during 2019–20. As a result, the number of full renewal applications have decreased annually.

Approved data extracts

Data extracts may be requested by approved third party and death investigator users, for NCIS data that cannot be exported or for complex searches that cannot be conducted through the online interface. There were 15 data extracts completed and delivered to NCIS approved users in 2021-22

Approved data on-provision agencies

Data on-provision refers to when an organisation that holds NCIS-sourced data wants to release, or 'on-provide', that data to external parties. An organisation can apply to the NCIS to become an approved Providing agency, which enables them to provide this data to Receiving agencies (the external parties) for research or statistical purposes that will benefit the wider community. In many cases, these applications will be to on-provide the Cause of Death Unit Record File (COD URF), which is held by the Australian Coordinating Registry but contains NCIS sourced data and thus requires NCIS Unit approval.

Table 8. Total number of data on-provision applications by financial year

Projects	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
New ⁸	1	1	0	0	0
Renewed	3	0	3	3	2

⁷ Refers to new and approved projects

⁸ Refers to new and approved projects

Data reporting

The NCIS Unit produced a total of 67 data reports at the request of coroners, death investigators and external parties (44 to coroners and death investigators, and 23 to external parties). The reports are used as evidence to inform public discussion and decision making.

Table 9. Total number of reports prepared by NCIS for death investigators and external parties by financial year

Service	Organisation	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22
Coronial report	Coroners courts and supporting agencies	57	32	38	38	44
D-4	External parties	43	19	27	25	22
Data report	Media organisations	4	2	2	-	1
Total		108	53	67	63	67

NCIS coronial report service

There were 44 coronial reports delivered in 2021–22, more than the previous year.

Over 15 per cent (n=7) of these reports examined intentional self-harm, 13.6 per cent examined child deaths (n=6), and 11.4 per cent examined natural cause deaths (n=5).

The largest proportion of coronial report requests were made by New South Wales (52.3%, n=23), followed by South Australia and Victoria (15.9%, n=7 reports each) and Queensland (6.8%, n=3).

An additional five requests were completed but did not result in the preparation of a report. There were no coronial report requests made that did not proceed.

A key feature within NCIS functionality is the capability for full text, keyword searching of descriptions about the fatal incident and medical and legal findings. This allows detailed searching for particular locations, drug types or environmental conditions that are not possible via other mortality data collections. Coroners may use this information for comparison and trend analysis purposes.

View the list of NCIS coronial reports in Appendix A - NCIS Coronial reports

NCIS data report service



We have found the NCIS data report service very useful. The team are always helpful, responsive, and the reports have been within the agreed timeframes.

The data assists us in creating Regulatory Impact Assessments to the Office of Best Practice Regulation, which is a required step for evidence-based policy proposals. We also use the data as part of targeted stakeholder consultation with industry groups and peak bodies.

William Le-Roux Hitch, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Data reports may be used as supporting evidence for external parties with an interest in death and injury prevention and can provide vital information regarding community safety. All information provided is non-identifying.

There were 23 data reports delivered in 2021–22, similar to the previous year. There were 12 reports which provided data on intentional self-harm. Four reports provided data on drugs and alcohol and two provided data on vehicle incidents.

The majority (56.5%) of these data reports (n=13) were requested by government, regulatory or statutory agencies. Five data reports were requested by non-profit or community groups.

A further 23 data report requests were made but did not proceed.

View the list of NCIS data to external parties in Appendix B - NCIS Data reports

Commonwealth reporting requirements

The NCIS Unit delivered three mortality reports to the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, a requirement of the partnership agreement held between the Commonwealth of Australia and the NCIS Unit. These reports included:

- NCIS Injury mortality data report 2019
- NCIS Drug mortality data report 2019
- NCIS Intentional self-harm mortality data report 2019

The NCIS Unit also delivered three reports to the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts in accordance with the updated funding agreement between the Department and the NCIS Unit. The NCIS Fatal facts: Transport-related deaths report provides case summaries and recommendations published in NCIS Fatal facts in 2021–22 that involved transport and traffic related incidents.

Data publishing

The NCIS Unit contributes to the assessment of mortality trends in coronial data by:

- promoting the unique value of the NCIS
- supporting evidence-based decisions in death and injury prevention
- enhancing public awareness of mortality risks and trends.

These aims are operationalised through our publications, tools and showcasing externally produced research using NCIS data.

All NCIS publications which include data and case summaries require coronial approval before release.

Facts sheets

NCIS fact sheets are unique NCIS products, free and publicly available via the NCIS website. They include statistical information on deaths reported to a coroner and cover specific topics of public interest. Fact sheets aim to raise awareness of mortality risks and to inform death and injury prevention strategies.

The NCIS Unit published several new fact sheets in 2021–22:



The *Household maintenance-related deaths in Australia* fact sheet was released in August 2021 as an update to a previously released fact sheet.

View the Household maintenance-related deaths in Australia fact sheet



The *Intentional self-harm deaths of health professionals in Australia* fact sheet was released on 6 October 2021 in alignment with World Mental Health Day 2021.

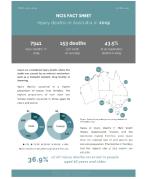
View the Intentional self-harm deaths of health professionals in Australia fact sheet



The *Benzodiazepine-related deaths in Australia* fact sheet is a new fact sheet released in June 2022.

View	the	Benzodiazepine-related	deaths	in	Australia
act sheet					

The NCIS Mortality data series is a suite of fact sheets that examines closed case external cause deaths due to injury and drug contribution. The Australian series also examines intentional self-harm deaths. The series provides yearly data on each type of death to enable comparisons over time.



The Australian and New Zealand Mortality data series fact sheets featuring 2019 data were published in June 2022.

View the Mortality data series

Fatal facts

A coroner may make recommendations as part of their inquiry into a death. Recommendations are made to help prevent similar deaths from occurring in the future.

⁹ From the 2019 series onwards, the intentional self-harm fact sheet is no longer published as part of the New Zealand Mortality data series. Information about suicide in New Zealand can be found at the **New Zealand Ministry of Health** website

Subject to coronial approval, the NCIS Unit publishes summaries of Australian¹⁰ cases in which a coroner has made a recommendation. These summaries are made available in two formats:

- Fatal facts a PDF publication containing summaries of cases with coronial recommendations made within a three-month period.
- Fatal facts search an interactive search tool allowing users to search by pre-defined case categories to identify cases relevant to the selected category.

The NCIS Unit published three editions of *Fatal facts* in 2021–22.

Fatal facts refresh

The NCIS Unit undertook a product review of Fatal facts in 2020–21. The review highlighted several opportunities to improve Fatal facts, including:

enhancing and explaining current search options in the search tool adding new functionality to the search tool reviewing and updating category tag and summary description conventions, and updating summaries contained in the search tool to align with current standards.

A phased implementation of the review's recommendations began in 2021–22. Implementation of these activities will ensure data contained in Fatal facts is consistent, and user experience is enhanced.

Details about the interface upgrades that have been made to date to improve the tool's functionality and user experience are available on the NCIS website. Implementation of the review's recommendations will continue in 2022–23.

View Fatal facts

NCIS data for external research publications

The NCIS database is available for direct access by researchers with ethically approved research projects. There were 98 active projects utilising NCIS data as at 30 June 2022. Many of these research projects result in professional and peer reviewed publications which are often cited by media outlets and subsequently inform public discussion.

Several long-term NCIS research projects continued to publish routine reports in the 2021-22 year including:

¹⁰ New Zealand cases are not included in Fatal facts search from April 2013 onwards, or in PDF editions from 37 onwards. New Zealand coronial recommendations are published by Coronial Services of New Zealand

- Australian Bureau of Statistics Causes of death
- Australian Institute of Criminology Homicide in Australia 2019-20 and Deaths in custody in Australia 2020-21 and 2019-20 statistical reports (NCIS core funder)
- Australian Institute of Suicide Research and Prevention Suicide in Queensland: Annual Report 2021
- NSW Ombudsman NSW child deaths
- Royal Life Saving Society Australia National Drowning Report 2021
- Safe Work Australia Work related fatalities (NCIS core funder)
- Surf Life Saving Australia National Coastal Safety Report 2021

Many NCIS projects produce academic publications as an outcome of the research. Some examples from 2021-22 include:

Coates, L., van Leeuwen, J., Browning, S., Gissing, A., Bratchell, J. and Avci, A. 2022. 'Heatwave fatalities in Australia, 2001–2018: An analysis of coronial records', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, vol. 67, p.102671. DOI:10.1016/j.ijdrr.2021.102671

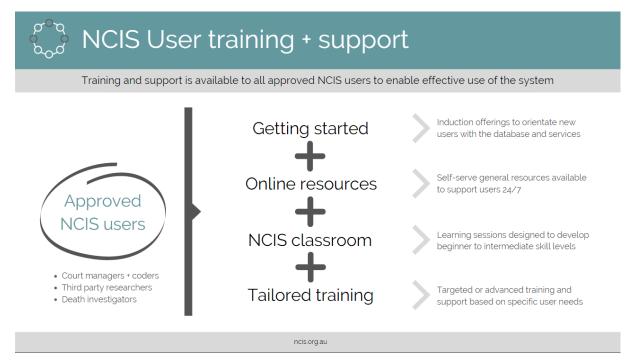
Darke, S., Peacock, A., Duflou, J., Farrell, M. and Lappin, J. 2022. 'Characteristics of fatal 'novel' benzodiazepine toxicity in Australia', *Forensic Science International*, vol. 331, p.111140. DOI:10.1016/j.forsciint.2021.111140

Fitzpatrick, S.J., Brew, B.K., Handley, T. and Perkins, D. 2022. 'Men, suicide, and family and interpersonal violence: A mixed methods exploratory study', *Sociology of Health & Illness*. DOI:10.1111/1467-9566.13476.

Currently, researcher publications are listed on the NCIS website by general topic. During 2021-22, the NCIS Unit commenced a review to explore ways to improve the way researcher publications using NCIS data is best showcased. Work is currently in progress to refresh this page and create new opportunities for NCIS researchers to submit published works for inclusion on the NCIS website. The *Research* page can still be visited to explore previous publications and reports using NCIS data.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

The NCIS Unit provides training and support to court staff, approved NCIS users, interested parties and students.



General information



The NCIS General information session provides an overview of the NCIS - how it came about, what it is and how it works. Participants gain an understanding of how NCIS data may be accessed, and the services offered by the NCIS Unit.

The session is delivered online and runs for approximately 40 minutes. Registrations can be submitted via Eventbrite.

The NCIS Unit offers the general information session on a quarterly basis to coroners, court staff, core funders, approved third party researchers, data report recipients and others interested in NCIS data. These public sessions were held in July 2021, October 2021, February 2022, and May 2022.

Upon request, the general information session can be delivered for a specific target organisation. Three targeted sessions were held during 2021-22 for the following organisations:

NSW Ministry of Health

- Australian Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
- Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine.

Database introduction session



The new Database introduction session was launched in November 2021 as a part of our training and support program. The session provides an orientation to each of the database screens and is ideal for new users and existing users wanting a refresh to help them get the most out of their approved system use.

The session is delivered online and runs for approximately 30 minutes. Invitations to attend are sent directly to approved NCIS users.

The NCIS Unit offers the database introduction session on a six-weekly cycle. Four sessions were delivered between November 2021 and June 2022.

Support for courts and coders

The NCIS Unit continued to provide support to coronial court staff responsible for entering the data that is transferred to the NCIS:

- The NCIS Data dictionary and Coding manual are references for those entering data used for the NCIS.
- Guidelines for coders include coding advice and tips specifically for NCIS coders.
- Quality assurance (QA) reports provided to each jurisdiction give an overview of the outcomes of the NCIS Unit quality assurance reviews of closed cases and where applicable, provide details on areas of focus we are currently working on with jurisdictional coding staff.
- Quarterly QA summary reports are produced for coronial managers to identify overall QA trends including the progress on agreed areas of focus.
- Coder training sessions are provided remotely to introduce new coders within the
 jurisdictions to the processes and logic of how to enter data for upload to the NCIS.
 Training sessions were provided to coroners court staff members from New South Wales,
 Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Australian Capital Territory during 2021-22.

Support for third party researchers and death investigators

The NCIS Unit has continued to increase the availability of database search training for approved third party researchers and death investigators to ensure users maximise the value of their NCIS access. Tailored training sessions are delivered online via Microsoft Teams, in addition to a series of search guides available online.

Internship program

The NCIS Internship program is designed to introduce students to a professional workplace where the skills and knowledge gained through study can be applied. Placements are considered learning opportunities for the next generation of criminology, research and health information management professionals. The NCIS Unit does not expect students to have expert knowledge of the NCIS or its workings.

All students are provided with:



A tailored work program



Full workplace induction, training and support

The NCIS Unit aims to provide students with a positive and productive placement. In return, students are expected to participate in office life and complete assigned tasks.

The NCIS Unit offers two internship streams:

Research
The Research stream provides students with an opportunity to participate in the production of NCIS publications such as:
 Preparing an NCIS fact sheet Preparing Fatal facts case summaries Students from all disciplines are welcome to apply, though those with a criminology or sociology background would be most suitable.

Quality placement 2021-22

The NCIS Unit has a long-standing history of hosting La Trobe University students as part of formal studies required for the Master of Health Information Management.

One student was hosted for a 20-day placement from 6 September to 8 October 2021. Key outcomes included:

Review pre-2004 case coding: Undertook a quality review of Queensland and South Australian cases closed prior to March 2004 where the primary *Mechanism of Injury* is Poisoning by other substances (not pharmaceutical). The focus was to determine if coding of the cases met the current coding protocols and if necessary, make amendments to the coding.

Research placement 2021–22

The NCIS Unit hosted a bachelor's level student from Monash University for an 11-day placement in January–March 2022. Key outcomes included:

• **Fatal facts case summaries:** Contribution to developing case summaries for inclusion in Fatal facts.

Read student testimonials

FINANCIAL REPORT

Table 10. Statement of receipts and expenditure year ended 30 June 2022.

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Opening balance (cash in bank)	762,855	687,763
Add receipts		
Income		
Government grants – Australia (1)	1,205,164	1,095,834
Government grants – New Zealand (2)	92,983	91,609
User pays (3)	146,349	259,170
Total	1,351,514	1,446,612
Less expenses		
Contractors, consultants and professional service expenses (4)	-	-
Depreciation (5)	4,886	18,388
Employee related expenses	953,908	957,730
Information technology expenses (6)	332,842	347,624
Postage and communication expenses (7)	4,388	1,147
Printing, stationery and other office expenses (8)	98,060	-13,005
Staff training and development expenses (9)	374	357
Travel, entertainment and personal expenses	-	32
Utilities and services	64,440	70,023
Total	1,459,225	1,382,297
Balance for the year	(107,711)	64,315
Capital expenditure	-	-
Accrued expenses and accounts payable (Net)	-	-
Accumulated depreciation (net of asset movements) (10)	4,886	18,388
Grants pain in advance	-	-
Accrued revenue	-	-
Accounts receivable	30,859	11,917
Movement in employee provisions (11)	(25,865)	(17,080)
Closing balance (cash in bank)	669,357	762,855

Explanatory notes for statement of receipts and expenditure

- 1. Refer to the next section *Government funding contributions* for more details.
- 2. Refer to the next section *Government funding contributions* for more details.
- 3. User pays income includes annual fees from third party researchers and fees from data reports.
- 4. There was no expenditure related to contractors, consultants or other professional services incurred in 2021-22.
- 5. Depreciation costs were lower than the previous year as the software has fully depreciated.
- 6. Information technology expenditure include payments to the NCIS' IT service provider and expenditure required for servers and various software licences.
- 7. Postage and communication expenses increased costs associated with the 1300 number and due to higher-than-normal mobile phone usage required to support business operations.
- 8. Printing, stationery and other office expenses also comprises of bad and doubtful debts The figure for 2020-21 is higher than previous years due to a bad and doubtful debt, which is not a cash flow expense and will be reversed in 2022-23 (when) it does not eventuate. It is recognised as an accounting requirement.
- 9. The NCIS Unit utilised staff training and development opportunities through its host jurisdiction and stakeholders resulting in minimal expenditure required throughout 2021-22.
- 10. Accumulated depreciation is lower this year as NCIS software has been fully depreciated.
- 11. Provisions for employee benefits or entitlements consist of amounts for annual leave and long service leave accrued by employees. Provisions are recognised when the NCIS Unit has a present obligation, the future sacrifice of economic benefits is probable, and the amount of the provision can be measured reliably. The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the consideration required to settle the present obligation at reporting period, taking into account the risks and uncertainties surrounding the obligation. There was no significant leave taken throughout the year.

Government funding contributions

The following funding contributions were made by governments this financial year:

Table 11. Breakdown of funding by agency in 2021-22.

Jurisdiction		Agency	Amount contributed \$AU (GST exclusive)
Commonwealth of Australia		Department of Health	412,000
		Australian Institute of Criminology	25,191
		Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	18,893

Jurisdiction	Agency	Amount contributed \$AU (GST exclusive)
	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	30,450
	SafeWork Australia	96,887
	Sub-total	583,421
Australian states and	Australian Capital Territory	8,473
territories	New South Wales	167,483
	Northern Territory	5,463
	Queensland	108,596
	South Australia	39,229
	Tasmania	12,728
	Victoria	134,995
	Western Australia	51,793
	Sub-total	528,760
New Zealand	New Zealand	92,983
Total		621,743

APPENDIX A - NCIS CORONIAL REPORTS

The NCIS Unit prepared and issued 44 coronial reports during 2021–22:

Australian Capital Territory

Reference	Title	Issued
CR21-36	Deaths of children under educational supervision in Australia	Oct–Dec 2021

New South Wales

Reference	Title	Issued
CR21-24A and B	Intentional self-harm deaths in New South Wales 2018-2021	Jul-Sep 2021
CR21-24C	External cause deaths in New South Wales 2018-2021	Jul-Sep 2021
CR21-24D	Natural cause deaths in New South Wales 2018-2021	Jul-Sep 2021
CR21-30	Death at Myall Lakes due to falling tree branch	Jul-Sep 2021
CR21-33A and B	Intentional self-harm deaths in New South Wales 2018-2021	Oct–Dec 2021
CR21-33C	External cause deaths in New South Wales 2018-2021	Oct–Dec 2021
CR21-33D	Natural cause deaths in New South Wales 2018-2021	Oct–Dec 2021
CR21-34	Deaths in NSW by country of Indigenous identification and birthplace	Oct–Dec 2021
CR21-37	Level crossing deaths in Australia	Oct-Dec 2021
CR21-42	Deaths involving religious refusal of blood-related medical treatment	Jan-Mar 2022
CR22-01A and B	Intentional self-harm deaths in New South Wales 2018-2021	Jan-Mar 2022
CR22-01C	External cause deaths in New South Wales 2018-2021	Jan–Mar 2022
CR22-01D	Natural cause deaths in New South Wales 2018-2021	Jan-Mar 2022
CR22-07	Intentional self-harm deaths in New South Wales 2015-2021	Jan–Mar 2022

Reference	Title	Issued
CR22-08	Work-related deaths in New South Wales	Jan-Mar 2022
CR22-10	Work-related deaths in New South Wales	Jan–Mar 2022
CR22-11	Deaths due to weather events and natural disasters in New South Wales	Jan–Mar 2022
CR22-12A and B	Intentional self-harm deaths in New South Wales 2018-2022	Apr–Jun 2022
CR22-12C	External cause deaths in New South Wales 2018-2022	Apr–Jun 2022
CR22-12D	Natural cause deaths in New South Wales 2018-2022	Apr–Jun 2022
CR22-16	Deaths associated with kambo ingestion	Apr–Jun 2022
CR22-18	Deaths at Pat Morton Lookout, New South Wales	Apr–Jun 2022
CR22-19	Coronial recommendations regarding police first aid training	Apr–Jun 2022

Northern Territory

There were no reports issued to the Northern Territory in this financial year.

Queensland

Reference	Title	Issued
CR21-39	Coronial recommendations regarding helium asphyxiation deaths in Victoria	Oct–Dec 2021
CR22-03	Deaths in the course of a police operation or in police custody in Queensland	Jan–Mar 2022
CR22-05	Deaths involving dog attacks in Australia	Jan-Mar 2022

South Australia

Reference	Title	Issued	
CR21-26	Deaths involving tuberculosis in Australia and New Zealand	Jul-Sep 2021	
CR21-32	Sodium nitrite and sodium nitrate- related deaths in Australia	Jul-Sep 2021	

Reference	Title	Issued
CR22-04	Deaths of infants involving amphetamine contribution in Australia	Jan–Mar 2022
CR22-09	Drowning deaths of children involving residential swimming pools	Jan–Mar 2022
CR22-13	Sodium nitrite and sodium nitrate- related deaths in Australia	Apr–Jun 2022
CR22-15	Infant deaths associated with co- sleeping and unascertained causes in Australia	Apr–Jun 2022
CR22-17	Vecuronium-related deaths in Australia	Apr–Jun 2022

Tasmania

There were no reports issued to Tasmania in this financial year.

Victoria

Reference	Title	Issued
CR21-28	Deaths of children and adolescents	Jul-Sep 2021
CR21-23	Intentional self-harm deaths at Flagstaff car park, Melbourne 2000-2021	Jul-Sep 2021
CR21-31	Drowning deaths of children in residential ponds in Australia	Jul-Sep 2021
CR21-35	Deaths involving bed pole entrapment in Australia	Oct–Dec 2021
CR21-38	Snorkelling deaths of persons born outside of Australia	Oct-Dec 2021
CR22-02	Coronial findings regarding smoke alarms in Victoria	Jan–Mar 2022
CR22-20	Worksite collapse-related deaths in Australia	Apr–Jun 2022

Western Australia

Reference	Title	Issued
CR21-27	Deaths of persons aged under 18 years reported to a Western Australian coroner, 2020-21 financial year	Jul-Sep 2021

Reference	Title	Issued
CR22-14	Cases involving changed intent type in Western Australia	Apr–Jun 2022

New Zealand

Reference	Title	Issued
CR21-25	Deaths due to vehicle chock failure in Australia and New Zealand	Jul-Sep 2021

APPENDIX B - NCIS DATA REPORTS

External parties

The NCIS Unit prepared and issued 23 coronial approved data reports during 2021–22 to external parties (including media outlets):

Reference	Title	Client	Issued
DR21-12 - Part B	Intentional self-harm deaths involving gas asphyxia in Australia 2000-2018	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	Jul-Sep 2021
DR21-15	Intentional self-harm deaths of people with terminal or debilitating conditions in NSW 2019	Dying with Dignity NSW	Jul–Sep 2021
DR21-18	Intentional self-harm deaths reported to a Western Australian coroner 2017-2020	Western Australian Mental Health Commission	Jul-Sep 2021
DR21-21	Intentional self-harm deaths associated with gambling	Perth Casino Royal Commission	Jul-Sep 2021
DR21-21B	Intentional self-harm deaths associated with gambling	Perth Casino Royal Commission	Jul-Sep 2021
DR21-23	Autopsy examination frequency for Australian coronial cases 2006-2018	Forensic Science South Australia	Jul–Sep 2021
DR21-24	Deaths involving side-by- side vehicles in Australia	Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries	Jul-Sep 2021
DR21-28	Intentional self-harm deaths of people with terminal illness in Queensland 2016-2017	Queensland Parliament	Jul-Sep 2021
DR21-29	Intentional self-harm deaths reported to a Western Australian coroner	Anglicare WA	Oct-Dec 2021
DR21-30	Deaths in NZ railway locations	TrackSAFE NZ	Oct-Dec 2021
DR21-31	Migraine-related deaths in Australia	Migraine Australia	Oct-Dec 2021

Reference	Title	Client	Issued
DR21-33	Intentional self-harm deaths of Victorian residents	Central Victorian Primary Care Partnership	Oct–Dec 2021
DR21-34	Paracetamol-related deaths in Australia	Therapeutic Goods Administration	Oct-Dec 2021
DR21-35	Intentional self-harm deaths of farmers and farm workers in Australia 2009-2018	National Rural Health Alliance	Oct-Dec 2021
DR21-34A	Paracetamol-related deaths in Australia	Therapeutic Goods Administration	Jan–Mar 2022
DR22-02	Intentional self-harm deaths of veterinarians in Australia	Australian Veterinary Association (WA division)	Jan–Mar 2022
DR22-02A	Intentional self-harm deaths of veterinarians in Australia	Australian Veterinary Association (WA division)	Apr–Jun 2022
DR22-05	Assault deaths perpetrated by family members and carers in Australia	Monash Health	Apr–Jun 2022
DR22-06	Deaths involving bicycle helmets in Australia	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	Apr–Jun 2022
DR22-07	Deaths involving household cots in Australia	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	Apr–Jun 2022
DR22-08	Drug-related deaths of health professionals in Australia	Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine	Apr–Jun 2022
DR22-15	Alcohol-related deaths in Australia	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare	Apr–Jun 2022

Media outlets

Reference	Title	Client	Issued
DR21-16	Deaths of persons who have been formally detained in Western Australia	The West Australian	Jul-Sep 2021