

Ms Jessica Pearse, National Coroners' Information System

Jessica Pearse is the Manager for the National Coroners' Information System (NCIS). She has a Bachelor of Information Management from Monash University, and has been managing the NCIS since July 2004.

Jessica has an interest in improving the availability of fatality data to death investigators, researchers and government, to assist them in determining any actions that could help prevent similar deaths in future.

The challenges of collecting and disseminating indigenous data from the coroners system

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- What is the NCIS
- How is “Indigenous Status” collected
- Data accuracy issues
- Issues surrounding release of the data
- Actions to resolve issues

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NCIS

The NCIS

- National data collection of information about every death reported to a coroner
- Contains a range of demographic, contextual, medical information (and full text reports) relating to the deceased
- One of demographic fields is the “Indigenous Origin” of the deceased

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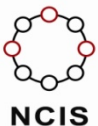
Indigenous Origin of the Deceased

Based on the Commonwealth definition/codes

- 1- Aboriginal not TSI
- 2 – TSI not Aboriginal
- 3 – Both Aboriginal and TSI
- 4 – Neither Aboriginal or TSI
- 8 – Still Enquiring
- 9 – Unlikely to be Known

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Collection of Indigenous Status

- Mainly sourced from police report of death to a coroner
- No standard form nationwide
 - some states do not have this field on their initial reporting of death forms (VIC, SA)
- No formal guidelines for collection
 - Suspect different methods used to ascertain indigenous origin of deceased

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Further Concerns about collection

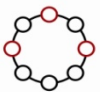
- What definition is being used
 - What % of indigenous heritage required before classified as such?
 - How do you know the deceased's heritage?
 - What if heritage *is sufficiently* indigenous but *did not identify* as such in life?
 - What if heritage *is not* sufficiently indigenous but *did identify* as such in life?

Accuracy Issues

- Different levels of collection
- Different methods of identification
- Different ways of coding this field when no information on indigenous status
 - Do coders select “Unlikely to be Known” if no information, or assume a default of “Neither Aboriginal or TSI”

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Current Statistics from the NCIS

- Aboriginal not TSI – 3,950 (0.32%)
- TSI not Aboriginal – 362
- Aboriginal not TSI – 175
- Neither – 87,060 (71%)
- Unlikely to be Known – 30,859 (25%)
- Total of 122,437 closed cases

Release of the data

- For third party users (non-death investigators) application process to access data
 - Involves consideration by NHMRC constituted Ethics Committee
- Data on the indigenous status of individuals can be considered “sensitive” information
 - Investigations into any additional considerations that need to be made before release of indigenous status field to data users

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Specialist Advice

- Since late 2002
 - Requested advice from:
 - NACCHO
 - NAGATSIHID
 - Vic DOJ Indigenous Issues Unit
 - NHMRC
- No clear advice about this issue

Some of the complexities

- Jurisdictional Issues
 - State entities unwilling to be responsible for considering national applications
 - Different tribal groups contained across the national/state mortality data
 - Unwieldy bureaucracy if each separate group consulted
 - Reluctance for permanent indigenous rep on existing Ethics Committee

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NCIS

Possible resolutions...

Dissemination

- Discussions with Prof Ian Anderson (Melbourne University)
- 2 Types of Scenarios

Part of Standard Demographic Data	I-S provided via standard application process
Specialist research into indigenous mortality	Reviewed by an informal panel of indigenous health researchers

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Possible resolutions...

Collection

- National Standard Police Form
 - Consistent section about indigenous persons
- Improved data sharing between data collections
 - Comparison of ABS & NCIS
 - Use of birth information
- Alternative data sources
 - Data collected from funeral homes

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Possible resolutions...

Accuracy

- Standard practice for coding when no information available.
- Possible training with police/data collectors??