



NCIS DATABASE SEARCH

**Australian External Cause Deaths
While Engaged In Hunting Activities**

Between 1 July 2000 – 1st August 2010

Produced for and provided to the Game Council of NSW

Compiled by: Lisa Crockett
National Coroners Information System
August 2010

Authorship Details

Lisa Crockett

NCIS Disclaimer

This data set does not purport to be representative of all external cause sporting-related fatalities between the specified time period.

Due to occasional coding errors, some missing data, and some cases not being closed it is possible that there are relevant deaths not included in this data set.

Accordingly, there is a possibility of under-reporting.

Purpose of Report

To contribute to the development of firearms safety and hunter education, planning for compliance programs and provision of accurate advice to State Government.

AIMS

The purpose of this report is to provide data to the Game Council of NSW on the number and nature of external cause sporting-related fatalities contained on the NCIS between 1 July 2000 and 1st August 2010.

METHODOLOGY

Data Source

The data was obtained through conducting a search of the National Coroners Information System (NCIS). The NCIS is a world first electronic database of coronial information containing case detail information from the coronial files of all Australian states and territories, except Queensland, dating back to 1 July 2000. Queensland data is contained from 1 January 2001.

Authorised users of the NCIS are able to access the database on-line at www.ncis.org.au

Case Identification

The method used to identify cases was as follows:

1. The NCIS Query Design function was utilised to identify all external case deaths between 1 July 2000 and 1st August 2010, where:

Case status = Closed

Case Type on completion: External Cause

Incident Activity = : Sports and active recreation activity

2. A further search was undertaken to identify any additional firearm related deaths (excluding intentional self harm) which may not have been identified as a leisure or sports activity on the NCIS.

This involved a search using the Coroners Screen where:

Case status = Closed

Police or Finding contained the term "hunt"

Data Analysis

Any duplicate cases were removed, and all unintentional firearm deaths not coded as during Sports Activity were examined to determine whether the circumstances of the firearm injury were associated with a leisure/hunting activity.

Any instances where it was found the deceased was deliberately killed were removed.

LIMITATIONS OF DATA SOURCE

The search was dependent upon the Activity, Case Type, Intent Type and Object field being coded. Often coded fields may not be completed until the closure of a case.

This factor needs to be considered, as the figures provided may be an under-representation of relevant deaths.

RESULTS

Between 1 July 2000 and 1st August 2010 there were 1473 external cause deaths while the deceased was undertaking sporting-relating activities identified on the NCIS.

Of these 1473 fatalities, 22 involved a Target Sport, with 13 of these deaths relating to an unintentional shooting incident. An additional 12 fatalities involving an unintentional shooting event during a leisure/hunting activity were identified where the activity had not been coded as occurring during a 'Sport'.

Sport and Recreation Codes/Jurisdiction

Table 1. External Cause Death Frequency for closed cases on NCIS by type of Sport/Recreation Activity

Code/Jurisdiction	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
<i>Individual Water Based</i> Fishing, Other Individual Water Based, Surf Life Saving, Surfing, Swimming, Underwater Sports (Scuba Diving/Snorkeling), Water Skiing, Wind Surfing	6	283	39	172	62	34	136	132	864
<i>Motor</i> Go-Karting/Karting, Motor Cycling, Motor Racing – Car, Other Motor	<3	46	11	30	14	20	16	33	Between 170-173
<i>Aero</i> Gliding, Hang Gliding, Other Aero, Parachuting, Para-Gliding	<3	20	3	9	3	3	28	7	Between 72-75
<i>Wheeled</i> BMX, Cycling – Mountain, Cycling – Road, In-line Skating (Roller Blading), Other Wheeled, Skateboarding	<3	37	<3	16	10	12	23	9	111
<i>Boat</i> Boat including Canoeing, Other Water Team, Rowing, Yachting	0	26	<3	16	12	7	21	10	Between 92-95
<i>Equestrian</i> Other Equestrian, Racing, Trail or General Riding	0	10	<3	13	<3	<3	6	3	35
<i>Adventure</i> Hiking, Mountaineering, Other Adventure, Rock Climbing	0	7	<3	5	<3	4	10	4	34
<i>Individual Land Based</i> Athletics, Orienteering, Other Individual Land Based	0	11	<3	8	4	0	10	<3	36
<i>Target</i> Billiards and Snooker, Darts, Golf, Lawn Bowls, Shooting	0	7	<3	3	<3	0	8	<3	22
<i>Ball Team</i> Australian Football, Basketball, Futsal (Indoor Soccer), Netball, Other Ball Team, Rugby League, Rugby Union, Soccer, Touch	0	5	0	<3	<3	0	<3	<3	Between 9-12

Ice and Snow Cross Country Skiing, Down Hill Skiing, Snowboarding	<3	<3	0	0	0	0	<3	0	6
Bat and Ball Team Cricket, Hockey, Indoor Cricket, Other Bat and Ball Team	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<3	<3
Racquet Tennis, Badminton	0	0	0	0	<3	<3	0	0	3
Other Aussie Sport (Modified Sport), School Free Play	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Power Strength and Conditioning, Weightlifting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<3	<3
Combative Aikido, Karate, Other Combative, Taekwondo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<3	<3
Unspecified Still Enquiring, Unlikely to be known	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
TOTAL	12	465	62	273	113	82	261	205	1473

Note: Some totals have been provided as a range e.g. "Between 92-95" to avoid unintentional identification of particular cases where low numbers are involved.

Appendix 1: Shooting/Hunting Deaths

De-identified case summary information for each of these shooting/hunting related deaths are provided below:

Firearm Injuries

Case 1: VIC

The deceased and a companion went duck shooting at a lake. Companion fell out of boat while trying to retrieve a shot duck from the water. Deceased grabbed hold of companion and in the process the companion's firearm (which was pointed upwards) discharged. Appears that, prior to falling in the lake, the companion had placed the loaded firearm across their lap but had not engaged the safety. It also appears that the swivel seat in the boat used by the companion could overbalance when engaged in activities such as retrieving a shot duck from the water.

Case 2: NSW

Deceased and friends were preparing for an evening of rabbit hunting. Before departing, deceased borrowed a .22 rifle from a friend (whose shooting licence had been revoked), looked through the scope, and placed the weapon under his chin. In the process the firearm discharged, causing fatal injuries. Appears deceased was unaware that the rifle was loaded.

Case 3: NT

Deceased and companion were pig hunting. Deceased shot a pig and went into swamp after it. Appears that firearm may have discharged while the deceased was retrieving the pig. Fatal injury to chest sustained.

Case 4: VIC

The deceased had been deer hunting with friends when one of the party noticed rustling in the trees. Not knowing where the deceased was, one of the party yelled out multiple times and when there was no response, fired their high powered lever action rifle once then a short time later, a second time. The shooter then went and inspected what had been shot at and found the deceased shot in the back of the head. The deceased was wearing camouflage clothing.

Case 5: VIC

The deceased was accidentally shot by a companion with a .22 caliber Winchester Magnum Rimfire, lever action rifle. The deceased and three companions were spotlight shooting kangaroos. Shortly after alighting from their vehicle and using the bonnet as a rest, one animal was wounded. The deceased and the companion walked beside the animal while trying to re-load. The companion was then asked to open a gate and while undertaking this task, their firearm discharged, striking the deceased. Neither the deceased or the companion were licensed.

Case 6: NSW

Deceased and friends were kangaroo shooting. After shooting a kangaroo, a member of the party began re-loading their rifle. As they gripped the .308 Ruger rifle it became unbalanced and discharged. Deceased (who was sitting in the front of the vehicle) sustained head injuries.

Case 7: QLD

The deceased accidentally shot themselves in the head while shooting on a private property. It is believed that the deceased was driving and shooting from the driver's side window. As the deceased replaced the .223 Rifle in the Passenger's seat foot well, the weapon has accidentally discharged, striking the deceased in the head. Police investigations showed that the rifle had a very light trigger.

Case 8: SA

Deceased (hunting alone), alighted from vehicle. The firearm being held discharged, causing head injuries.

Case 9: VIC

Deceased and friends were fox shooting in a paddock. It appears that members of the group were walking along a gully trying to scare the foxes out of the bracken when one of the group saw a fox. The shooter took aim at the fox, which was between the shooter and the gully and fired. Part of the spread of shotgun pellets hit the fox, but the rest of the spread went through the bracken and struck the deceased.

Case 10: VIC

Deceased set out to shoot a fox they had seen in the area. Appears that the deceased tripped on a fallen tree branch, causing the gun to discharge.

Case 11: TAS

Deceased and a friend were spotlighting for wallabies. As the vehicle was reversing, the rifle being held by the deceased discharged. This was found to be due to a faulty safety catch.

Case 12: VIC

Rifle discharged while deceased was attempting to shoot a fox on the deceased's property. It is suggested the rifle may have discharged while the deceased was climbing through a fence.

Case 13: QLD

The deceased was returning home after wallaby shooting with friends. Deceased was climbing down from the roof of the vehicle when his shotgun has discharged, resulting in a fatal chest injury.

Case 14: QLD

The deceased was sustained fatal injuries while hunting. The incident resulted from a loaded rifle discharging when the vehicle the deceased was travelling in came to a stop.

Case 15: VIC

The deceased went on a hunting excursion with 2 family members to hunt rabbits on a private property. The shooter shot at a rabbit and in the same movement brought the rifle to the right side. It was at this point the rifle unintentionally discharged a second time, hitting the deceased.

Case 16: VIC

Upon arriving home the deceased retrieved a .22 rifle from the gun cabinet, indicating there was a fox on the property. The deceased was found later lying next to a forked tree with one of their legs in the tree fork. The police officer who investigated this matter has said that it is possible that the deceased may have grasped the firearm by the barrel whereby it has discharged, possibly after the trigger snagged in the undergrowth.

Other injuries

Case 17: VIC

The deceased was fox shooting with friends, and was traveling in the rear of a vehicle which had a stock crate attached. Upon entering a paddock, the vehicle has rolled onto its roof, with the deceased crushed by the steel crate.

Case 18: NT

The deceased was a passenger in a vehicle which rolled during a shooting trip on a rural paddock.

Case 19: NSW

Deceased and friends were hunting feral pigs. During the expedition, the deceased was an unrestrained passenger travelling on the rear tray of utility with several dogs. Driver lost control of vehicle, causing the vehicle to roll. Deceased crushed underneath.

Case 20: QLD

Deceased and friend were pig hunting. Deceased was in possession of a 20cm double bladed knife which was extremely sharp and the other person was in possession of a dolphin torch. The deceased was carrying the knife in their hand and the blade was not protected. The deceased and friend have fallen into water. The deceased has accidentally stabbed themselves in the right outer thigh just above the knee, sustaining a fatal injury.

Case 21: SA

The deceased was a passenger in the back of a Ute with a tray attachment spotlight shooting when the vehicle overturned.

Case 22: NT

Deceased drove to an outstation in order to hunt animals. While chasing animals the deceased lost control of the vehicle, causing it to roll. Multiple injuries sustained.

Case 23: NSW

Deceased and friend were riding quad bikes along dirt tracks during a day kangaroo shooting. The bike came off the track, before travelling out of control. Deceased was thrown from bike and into a tree. Traumatic head injuries sustained.



Cases 24 & 25: QLD

A group of 4 people had been drinking when they decided to go pig hunting. All four persons were seated in the front of a utility which had the roof and tray removed when the vehicle was being driven along a dry creek bed. The vehicle overturned on an embankment and overturned landing on the roof. Two of the four persons were killed.

DATA SOURCES

Data on the NCIS has been provided by each State and Territory Coroner's Office around Australia.

Additional codes are also provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

 <p>ACT Magistrates Court and Tribunals</p>	<p>Coroner's Court New South Wales</p> 
	
 <p>STATE CORONER'S COURT</p> <p>COURTS ADMINISTRATION AUTHORITY SOUTH AUSTRALIA</p>	
	

Note: In some States/Territories the Coroners Office is part of the Magistrates Court

FUNDING AGENCIES

Operational funding for the NCIS is provided by the following agencies:

- Each State and Territory Justice/Attorney-General's Department
- Australian Department of Health and Ageing
- Australian Institute of Criminology
- Australian Safety and Compensation Council
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Australian Transport Safety Bureau