

Statistical Bulletin No. 15
November, 1980.

SYDNEY CORONERS' COURTS:
STATISTICS 1978.

Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
N.S.W. Department of the Attorney-general and of Justice
Box 6, G.P.O., Sydney, N.S.W., 2001

Senior City Coroner: L.J. Nash, Stipendiary Magistrate
City Coroner : Mrs. M. Sleeman, Stipendiary Magistrate
Coroners Court
44-46 Parramatta Road, Glebe, 2037

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| | <u>1975.</u> | <u>1976.</u> | <u>1977.</u> | <u>1978.</u> |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Inquests and Magisteral Inquiries held | 1589 | 1446 | 1315 | 1308 |
| Fire inquiries held. | 8 | 17 | 9 | 18 |
| Inquests held before a Jury. 1. | 1597 | 1463 | 1324 | 1326 |
| <u>Findings as to manner and cause of death.</u> | | | | |
| | <u>1975.</u> | <u>1976.</u> | <u>1977.</u> | <u>1978.</u> |
| 1. <u>Suicide.</u> | 336 | 342 | 265 | 293 |
| 2. <u>Suicide whilst insane.</u> | 1 | 5 | 2 | - |
| 3. <u>Open finding.</u> | 181 | 130 | 124 | 113 |
| 4. <u>Accidental Drug Death.</u> | 54 | 68 | 73 | 46 |
| 5. <u>Accidental Drowning.</u> | 70 | 59 | 53 | 49 |
| 6. <u>Traffic</u> - Inquest adjourned and followed by committal proceedings when person charged with manslaughter or culpable driving:- | | | | |
| (a) Committed for trial. | 47 | 40 | 30 | 55 |
| (b) Discharged. | 14 | 11 | 12 | 11 |
| (c) Dealt with in Children's Court. | 2 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| 7. <u>Traffic</u> - Inquest adjourned when prima facie case of manslaughter or culpable driving established against a known person. | 16 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| 8. <u>Other traffic accidents.</u> | 440 | 381 | 310 | 395 |
| 9. <u>Other accidents.</u> | 293 | 236 | 298 | 221 |
| 10 (a) <u>Adjourned</u> and followed by committal proceedings when person charged with murder or non traffic manslaughter. | 42 | 63 | 48 | 34 |
| (b) <u>Adjourned</u> when prima facie case of murder or non traffic manslaughter established by Coroner against a known person. | - | 1 | - | 20 |
| 11. <u>Killed</u> by a person since deceased or unknown. | 13 | 13 | 14 | 12 |
| 12. <u>Excusable</u> and <u>justifiable</u> homicide. | 1 | 1 | - | 1 |

13. Natural causes.

(a) Whilst driving a motor vehicle
and not included in categories
6, 7, or 8.

(b) Others.

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| - | 24 | 14 | 6 |
| 79 | 66 | 71 | 48 |
| <u>1589</u> | <u>1446</u> | <u>1315</u> | <u>1308.</u> |

SUICIDE FINDINGS. Categories No. 1 & 2. Total 293.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| 1. <u>Sex.</u> | Male | 208 |
| | Female | 85 |
| | | <u>293</u> |
| <hr/> | | |
| 2. <u>Age.</u> | To 12 years | nil. |
| | 13 to 19 years | 15 |
| | 20 to 29 years | 72 |
| | 30 to 39 years | 46 |
| | 40 to 49 years | 52 |
| | 50 to 59 years | 48 |
| | 60 to 69 years | 41 |
| | 70 and over | 19 |
| | | <u>293</u> |
| <hr/> | | |
| 3. <u>Marital Status.</u> | | |
| | Married | 110 |
| | " but separated | 10 |
| | Single | 113 |
| | Divorced | 27 |
| | Widow/widower | 30 |
| | Not stated | 3 |
| | | <u>293</u> |
| <hr/> | | |
| 4. <u>Method.</u> | | |
| | Overdose. Total | 64 |
| | Barbiturate | 38 |
| | " plus alcohol | - |
| | Other sedative | 17 |
| | Anti depressants | 8 |
| | Narcotism | 1 |
| | | <u>64</u> |
| | Shooting | 54 |
| | Hanging | 46 |
| | Gas. | |
| | Appliances | 24 |
| | Exhaust | 36 |
| | Jumping from heights | 25 |
| | Gas from gas bottle | 1 |
| | Poison | 13 |
| | Lie or jump under train | 8 |
| | Stabbing | 2 |
| | Drowning | 5 |
| | Burning | 4 |
| | Electrocution | 1 |
| | Suffocation | 2 |
| | Asphyxia (used pure and simple) | 1 |
| | Cut throat | 2 |
| | Lie in front of car | 2 |
| | Cut wrists | 3 |
| | | <u>229</u> |
| <hr/> | | |
| 5. <u>Alcohol in blood.</u> | | |
| | Nil | 218 |
| | Below .08% | 26 |
| | .08% plus | 47 |
| | Not stated | 2 |
| | | <u>293</u> |
| <hr/> | | |

| | | |
|--|--|------------|
| 6. <u>Suicide note left.</u> | | |
| Yes | | 77 |
| No | | <u>216</u> |
| | | 293 |
| <hr/> | | |
| 7. <u>Any prior treatment of psychiatric nature.</u> | | |
| Yes | | 113 |
| No | | <u>180</u> |
| | | 293 |
| <hr/> | | |
| 8. <u>Prior indication of suicide.</u> | | |
| Yes | | 114 |
| No | | <u>179</u> |
| | | 293 |
| <hr/> | | |
| 9. <u>County of origin.</u> | | |
| Australia | | 213 |
| England | | 12 |
| Italy | | 9 |
| Germany | | 7 |
| Yugoslavia | | 6 |
| New Zealand | | 4 |
| Hungary | | 3 |
| Scotland | | 3 |
| Finland | | 3 |
| Greece | | 2 |
| Poland | | 2 |
| Holland | | 2 |
| Russia | | 2 |
| Egypt | | 2 |
| France | | 1 |
| Lebanon | | 1 |
| Czechoslovakia | | 1 |
| Romania | | 1 |
| Malta | | 1 |
| Cuba | | 1 |
| Sweden | | 1 |
| China | | 1 |
| Cypres | | 1 |
| South Africa | | 1 |
| Uganda | | 1 |
| Armenia | | 1 |
| Chile | | 1 |
| Denmark | | 1 |
| Unknown | | <u>9</u> |
| | | 293 |
| <hr/> | | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| 10. <u>Occupations.</u> | | | |
| <u>Males</u> | | <u>Females.</u> | |
| Professional | 6 | Pensioner | 37 |
| Commercial | 22 | Home duties | 23 |
| Clerical | 7 | Office | 6 |
| Tradesman | 35 | Student | 5 |
| Unskilled | 17 | Teacher | 5 |
| Pensioner | 46 | Factory | 1 |
| Unemployed | 31 | Unemployed | 1 |
| Retired | 5 | Shop Asst. | 1 |
| Student | 9 | Bar maid | 1 |
| Factory | 16 | Fashion | |
| Prisoner | 3 | designer | 1 |
| Seaman | 1 | Sister of | |
| | | religion | 1 |
| Journalist | 1 | Nurse | <u>3</u> |
| Nurse | 1 | | 85 |
| Teacher | 1 | | |
| Station assistant | 2 | | |
| Not known | <u>5</u> | | |
| | 208 | | |

OPEN FINDINGS. Category No. 3 Total 113.

| | |
|--|------------|
| No evidence of manner and cause of death or either | 24 |
| Left "open" as between suicide or accidental. | 89 |
| | <u>113</u> |

OPEN (SUICIDE OR ACCIDENTAL).

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. <u>Sex.</u></p> <p>Male 51</p> <p>Female 38</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>89</u></p> | <p>5. <u>Reason for open finding.</u></p> <p>Lack of evidence of intent 50</p> <p>Insufficient evidence 22</p> <p>Addicted or habitual to drugs 13</p> <p>Possible natural causes 1</p> <p>Decomposition <u>3</u></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>89</u></p> |
| <p>2. <u>Age.</u></p> <p>To 12 years -</p> <p>13 to 19 years 6</p> <p>20 to 29 years 28</p> <p>30 to 39 years 12</p> <p>40 to 49 years 16</p> <p>50 to 59 years 13</p> <p>60 to 69 years 7</p> <p>70 years plus 5</p> <p>Not stated 2</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>89</u></p> | |
| <p>3. <u>Method of death.</u></p> <p>Overdose</p> <p>Barbiturate 29</p> <p>Barbiturate plus alcohol 7</p> <p>Other sedative 8</p> <p>Anti-depressant 1</p> <p>Heroin 15</p> <p>Other drugs 2</p> <p>Fall from height 8</p> <p>Drowning 10</p> <p>Gassing 3</p> <p>Train-struck or fell from 1</p> <p>Shooting 1</p> <p>Head injury 2</p> <p>Unascertainable 2</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>89</u></p> | |
| <p>4. <u>Opinion as to the more likely manner</u></p> <p>Suicide 15</p> <p>Accidental 47</p> <p>Equivocal 26</p> <p>Natural causes 1</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>89</u></p> | |

ACCIDENTAL (NON-INTENDED) DRUG DEATHS. Category No. 4. Total 46

1. Hard drugs.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Heroin | 6 |
| Morphine | 7 |
| Cocaine | 1 |
| Methadone | 2 |

16

2. Sedatives-depressants.

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Chloral Hydrate | |
| Elix-nocte | 2 |
| Dormel | 2 |
| Barbiturates plus | |
| alcohol | 14 |
| Diazepam plus | |
| alcohol | 1 |

19

Alcohol readings from
.03½ to .07½.

3. Alcohol Alone. 7

Blood alcohol
readings:- .260%
.265%, .370%, .371%
.380%, .490%, .535%

4. Other drugs.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Paracetamol | 1 |
| Fire extinguisher | |
| gas | 1 |
| Nonpropoxyphene | 1 |
| Oxazepam | 1 |

4

5. Sex.

| | |
|--------|----|
| Male | 27 |
| Female | 19 |

46

6. Age.

| | |
|----------------|----|
| to 12 years | 1 |
| 13 to 19 years | 1 |
| 20 to 29 years | 15 |
| 30 to 39 years | 11 |
| 40 to 49 years | 9 |
| 50 to 59 years | 5 |
| 60 to 69 years | 3 |
| 70 years plus | 1 |

46

7. Addicted or habituated
to drugs.

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| Yes | 35 |
| No | 6 |
| Not Known | 5 |
| | <u>46</u> |

8. Expansion of the hard drug scene.
Total "Accidental" Drug Deaths.

| | <u>1975</u> | <u>1976</u> | <u>1977</u> | <u>1978</u> |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Drug | | | | |
| Morphine | 6 | 7 | 13 | 7 |
| Heroin | 2 | 10 | 13 | 6 |
| Methadone | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Cocaine | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Palfium | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Pethidine | - | - | 1 | - |
| Total | <u>9</u> | <u>22</u> | <u>29</u> | <u>17</u> |

ACCIDENTAL DROWNINGS.

Category No. 5

Total 49

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. <u>Sex.</u> | |
| Male | 38 |
| Female | 11 |
| | <u>49</u> |
| | — |
| 2. <u>Age.</u> | |
| to 5 years | 6 |
| 6 to 12 years | 1 |
| 13 to 19 years | 5 |
| 20 to 29 years | 7 |
| 30 to 39 years | 8 |
| 40 to 49 years | 9 |
| 50 to 59 years | 5 |
| 60 to 69 years | 4 |
| 70 years plus | 4 |
| | <u>49</u> |
| | — |
| 3. <u>Swimming ability.</u> | |
| Good | 11 |
| Fair | 6 |
| Slight | 2 |
| Nil including children | 10 |
| Not known | 12 |
| Not applicable | 8 |
| | <u>49</u> |
| | — |
| 4. <u>Country of origin.</u> | |
| Australia | 37 |
| England | 4 |
| Greece | 2 |
| Italy | 1 |
| Ireland | 1 |
| Scotland | 1 |
| Chile | 1 |
| Spain | 1 |
| Holland | 1 |
| | <u>49</u> |
| | — |
| 5. <u>Alcohol in blood.</u> | |
| Nil including children | 29 |
| Below .08% | 1 |
| .08% plus | 17 |
| Not known | 2 |
| | <u>49</u> |
| | — |

6. Circumstances.

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| Public pools - | |
| Under 5 years | - |
| Over 5 years | 1 |
| Home pools | |
| Unfenced - | |
| Under 5 years | 2 |
| Over 5 years | - |
| Fenced - | |
| Under 5 years | 5 |
| Over 5 years | 2 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 10 |
| | <hr/> |

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Rock fisherman | 4 |
| Open sea | 2 |
| Surf | 4 |
| Skin diver | 4 |
| River | 9 |
| Accidental fall into | |
| Harbour | 1 |
| Drunken falls into | |
| water | 6 |
| Boating and canoeing | 2 |
| Bath - | |
| Under 5 years | - |
| Over 5 years | 7 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 39 |
| | <hr/> |

7. Home pool drownings.

| | <u>1975</u> | <u>1976</u> | <u>1977</u> | <u>1978</u> |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Under 5 years | 21 | 10 | 10 | 9 |
| Total drownings | 70 | 59 | 53 | 49 |
| Proportion | 30% | 17% | 19% | 18% |

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT DEATHS. Categories Nos. 6, 7 and 8. Total 465

| Status | Driver. | Passenger. | Motor cycle rider. | Pillion passenger. | Pedal cycle or scooter. | Pedestrians. | Total. | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------|-----|
| SEX | Male | 108 | 53 | 3 | 11 | 120 | 337 | |
| | Female | 22 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 50 | 128 | |
| | To 12 years | - | - | - | 7 | 26 | 38 | |
| AGE | 13-19 years | 21 | 20 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 79 | |
| | 20-29 years | 35 | 27 | 4 | 2 | 12 | 104 | |
| | 30-39 years | 24 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 44 | |
| | 40-49 years | 17 | 3 | 2 | - | 17 | 39 | |
| | 50-59 years | 12 | 10 | - | - | 20 | 42 | |
| | 60-69 years | 13 | 8 | - | - | 27 | 48 | |
| | 70 plus | 8 | 8 | 1 | - | 54 | 71 | |
| | Totals. | 130 | 92 | 54 | 6 | 13 | 170 | 465 |
| | ALCOHOL | Not known | 6 | 4 | - | - | 11 | 27 |
| | | Nil (including children) | 57 | 52 | 32 | 12 | 124 | 280 |
| Below .08% | | 11 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 29 | |
| .08%-.150% | | 23 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 11 | 50 | |
| .151%-.250% | | 24 | 12 | 4 | - | 7 | 47 | |
| .251% plus | | 9 | 5 | 6 | - | 12 | 32 | |
| Totals. | | 130 | 92 | 54 | 6 | 13 | 170 | 465 |

The figures understate the alcohol factor. Many victims survive for considerable periods after injury. Where death occurs more than 24 hours after injury, blood alcohol analysis is not ordered. Survival even for a few hours will result in a lower reading and in fact may result in a "nil" reading.

OTHER ACCIDENTS. Category No. 9
(i.e., excluding accidental drugs,
drowning and road traffic deaths.)

Total 221

1. Circumstances.

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| <u>Falls</u> | |
| Drunken | 18 |
| At work | 7 |
| From train | 4 |
| On footpath | 7 |
| At home | 3 |
| From building | 4 |
| From cliff | 2 |
| From ladder | 3 |
| From window | 4 |
| Down stairs | 15 |
| From horse | 2 |
| At sport | 4 |
| From chair | 1 |
| From "baby walker" | 1 |
| From tree | 1 |
| Others, mostly aged persons | 22 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 98 |
| | <hr/> |

2. Burns.

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Smoking in bed or chair | 10 |
| House on fire | 7 |
| In bath | 4 |
| In shower | 1 |
| Radiator | 1 |
| Stove | 1 |
| At work | 2 |
| Set bed on fire | 1 |
| Fire in caravan | 1 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 28 |
| | <hr/> |

3. Injuries.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Hit or run over by train | 9 |
| Falling object | 1 |
| Tractor overturned | 3 |
| Ran over by own car | 1 |
| Plane crash | 4 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 18 |
| | <hr/> |

4. Suffocation.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Smoke from fire in house | 2 |
| Buried in trench | 1 |
| Smoking in bed | 4 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 7 |
| | <hr/> |

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| 5. <u>Factory or ship.</u> | |
| Hit by machinery | 5 |
| Crushed | 3 |
| Fell in fat of liquid | 1 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 9 |
| | <hr/> |
| 6. <u>Gassed.</u> | |
| Stove left on | 18 |
| Faulty appliance | 3 |
| Car exhaust | 1 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 22 |
| | <hr/> |
| 7. <u>Electrocution.</u> | |
| Faulty appliance. | 3 |
| Touched live wires | 7 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 10 |
| | <hr/> |
| 8. <u>Choking.</u> | |
| Food | 8 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 8 |
| | <hr/> |
| 9. <u>Strangulation.</u> | |
| Auto eroticism | 3 |
| Hanging | 1 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 4 |
| | <hr/> |
| 10. <u>Others.</u> | |
| Shooting | 5 |
| Hit by objects | 2 |
| Hang glider crash | 1 |
| Ran over by motor vehicle | |
| whilst seated on bus | |
| shelter seat | 1 |
| Crushed by pier fall | 1 |
| Crushed by falling tree | 1 |
| Toxaemia after cut | |
| foot | 1 |
| Cerebral hypoxia | |
| after faulty endot- | |
| raceal tube during | |
| operation | 1 |
| Carbon monoxide- | |
| faulty ventilation | |
| for bath heater | 1 |
| Sniffing "pure and simple" | 1 |
| Fall into bath | 1 |
| Inhalation of chlordene | 1 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 17 |
| | <hr/> |