

Statistical Bulletin No.

June, 1981

SYDNEY CORONERS' COURTS:

STATISTICS 1980

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

City Coroner: Mr. N. F. Walsh, Stipendiary Magistrate.
Assistant Coroner: Miss S. E. Schreiner, Stipendiary Magistrate.

Coroners Court,
44-46 Parramatta Road, Glebe, 2037

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared from inquests and inquiries heard before the City Coroners' Court, Glebe, which deals with approximately one third of coronial inquiries in N.S.W. each year.

The figures relate to inquiries conducted and finalised in 1980, not to deaths occurring in that year.

On the 16th April, 1980, a new Coroners Act was assented to, which replaced the Coroners Act of 1960. Legislative changes therein have been taken into account in the collation of this report.

"Suspected deaths" have been included in the new legislation thus dispensing with the need for a "Magisterial" inquiry" in cases where a body has not been recovered.

Under the new Act, coroners have discretion as to whether they will hold or dispense with an inquest. The grounds on which a coroner may decide not to hold an inquest are set out in S.14(2). This is in contrast to the Coroner's "duty" to hold an inquest under the 1960 Act (S.11(1)) and the three defined cases in which an inquiry could be dispensed with under that Act (s.11(2)(b)). For this reason figures for both Inquests Held and Inquests Dispensed With are shown in this report.

Comparisons with figures from previous years may therefore be inhibited because of these changes to the legislation. The new Act came into effect on 1st July, 1980.



	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Inquests and Magisterial Inquiries held	1446	1315	1308	1273	941
Fire Inquiries held	<u>17</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>12</u>
Inquests held before a Jury - 3	<u>1463</u>	<u>1324</u>	<u>1326</u>	<u>1279</u>	<u>953</u>
Inquests dispensed with	NA	NA	NA	NA	215

FINDINGS AS TO MANNER AND CAUSE OF DEATH

	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>Inquest held</u>	<u>1980 Inquest dispensed with</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1. <u>Suicide</u>	342	265	293	323	178	78	256
2. <u>Suicide whilst in cachectic state</u>	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
3. <u>Open Finding</u>	130	124	113	145	106	-	106
4. <u>Accidental drug death</u>	68	73	46	86	62	14	76
5. <u>Accidental drowning</u>	59	53	49	45	33	4	37
6. <u>Traffic - inquest adjourned or terminated and followed by committal proceedings when person charged with culpable driving or manslaughter -</u>							
a) Committed for Trial	40	30	55	31	99	-	99
b) Discharged	11	12	11	6	9	-	9
c) Dealt within Children's Court	3	-	3	2	-	-	-
7. <u>Traffic - Inquest adjourned or terminated when 'prima facie' case of manslaughter or culpable driving established against a known person</u>	3	1	1	1	12	-	12
8. <u>Other Traffic Accidents</u>	381	310	395	330	250	70	320
9. <u>Other Accidents</u>	236	298	221	201	118	47	165
10. a) <u>Adjourned or terminated and followed by committal proceedings when person charged with murder or non-traffic manslaughter</u>	63	48	34	40	26	-	26
b) <u>Adjourned or terminated when 'prima facie' case of murder or non-traffic manslaughter established by Coroner against a known person</u>	1	-	20	-	-	-	-
11. <u>Killed by a person since deceased or unknown</u>	13	14	12	7	10	-	10
12. <u>Excusable and Justifiable Homicide</u>	1	-	1	3	-	-	-
13. <u>Natural Causes</u>							
a) <u>Whilst driving a motor vehicle and not included in categories 6, 7 and 8</u>	24	14	6	-	-	-	-
b) <u>Other</u>	66	71	48	53	36	2	38
14. <u>Fires</u>	17	9	18	6	12	-	12

SUICIDE FINDINGS - Categories 1 & 2

	<u>Inquest held</u>	<u>Inquest dispensed with</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>Inquest held</u>	<u>Inquest dispensed with</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1. SEX				4. METHOD (Continued)			
Male	127	53	180	Stabbing	3	-	3
Female	51	25	76	Drowning	5	6	11
	<u>178</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>256</u>	Burning	1	3	4
2. AGE				Electrocution	4	-	4
to 12 yrs	-	-	-	Suffocation	-	-	-
13 to 19 yrs	9	3	12	Cut throat	2	-	2
20 to 29 yrs	26	11	37	Lie in front of car/cycle	1	-	1
30 to 39 yrs	38	17	55	Crash car	1	1	2
40 to 49 yrs	32	11	43	Spearwound to chest	-	1	1
50 to 59 yrs	33	18	51	Asphyxiated	1	-	1
60 to 69 yrs	25	5	30	Slash wrist	2	-	2
70 & over	15	12	27		<u>178</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>256</u>
Not known	-	1	1				
	<u>178</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>256</u>				
3. MARITAL STATUS				5. ALCOHOL IN BLOOD			
Married	61	32	93	Nil	119	49	168
Married but separated	17	4	21	Below .08%	20	8	28
Single	61	23	84	.08% plus	33	19	52
Divorced	15	8	23	Not Stated	6	2	8
Widow/Widower	16	11	27		<u>178</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>256</u>
Not stated	8	-	8				
	<u>178</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>256</u>				
4. METHOD				6. SUICIDE NOTE LEFT			
Overdose	59	-	59	Yes	77	23	100
Barbiturate	34	8	42	No	101	55	156
Barbiturate & alcohol	10	-	10		<u>178</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>256</u>
Other sedative	7	-	7	7. ANY PRIOR TREATMENT OF PSYCHIATRIC NATURE			
Anti-depressant	7	4	11	Yes	70	39	109
Other drugs	1	6	7	No	53	28	81
	<u>59</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>77</u>	Not stated	55	11	66
Shooting	32	13	45		<u>178</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>256</u>
Hanging	15	10	25	8. PRIOR INDICATION OF SUICIDE			
Gas				Yes	52	16	68
a) Appliances	17	8	25	No	100	42	142
b) Exhaust	15	10	25	Not stated	26	20	46
Jumping from height	11	5	16		<u>178</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>256</u>
Poison	5	-	5				
Lie/jump under train	4	3	7				

SUICIDE FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

9. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Australia	125	60	185
England	13	3	16
Scotland	2	2	4
Italy	4	1	5
Poland	2	1	3
Germany	2	1	3
Yugoslavia	2	1	3
New Zealand	6	3	9
Hungary	3	-	3
India	1	-	1
Finland	2	-	2
U.S.A.	1	-	1
Czechoslovakia	1	1	2
Malta	2	-	2
Latvia	1	1	2
Chile	1	1	2

9. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (Continued)

Lebanon	1	-	1
China	3	-	3
South Africa	1	-	1
Indonesia	1	-	1
Iraq	1	-	1
Holland	1	-	1
Sudan	-	1	1
USSR	-	1	1
Sweden	-	1	1
Unknown	2	-	2
	<u>178</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>256</u>

10. OCCUPATIONS

<u>MALES</u>	<u>Inquest Held</u>	<u>Inquest Dispensed With</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>FEMALES</u>	<u>Inquest Held</u>	<u>Inquest Dispensed With</u>	<u>Total</u>
Professional	8	8	16	Office/ Clerical	5	4	9
Commercial	13	8	21	Factory Worker	3	-	3
Clerical/ Office	-	3	3	Unskilled	1	1	2
Tradesman	13	1	14	Pensioner	13	7	20
Factory Worker	2	2	4	Unemployed	7	1	8
Unskilled	22	9	31	Student	2	1	3
Pensioner	41	10	51	Self-employed	1	1	2
Unemployed	17	11	28	Nurse	1	-	1
Retired	3	-	3	Teacher	2	1	3
Prisoner	1	-	1	Model	1	-	1
Armed Forces	2	-	2	Writer	1	-	1
Teacher	2	-	2	Agent	-	1	1
Cook	1	-	1	Home Duties	12	8	20
Entertainer	1	-	1	Not known	2	-	2
Foreman	1	-	1		<u>51</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>76</u>
Laboratory Assistant	-	1	1				
	<u>127</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>180</u>				

OPEN FINDINGS

Category No. 3

Total = 145

No. evidence of manner and cause of death	39
Left "open" as between suicide or accidental	106
	<hr/>
	145
	<hr/>

OPEN (Suicide or accidental)

1. <u>Sex</u>	Inquest Held	4. <u>Reason for Open Finding</u>	
Male	75	Lack of evidence of intent	47
Female	31	Insufficient evidence	42
	<hr/>	Mental Illness factor	18
	106	Decomposition	28
	<hr/>	Addicted to or habituated to drugs	7
2. <u>Age</u>		Possible natural cause	3
to 12 yrs	-		<hr/>
13 to 19 yrs	5		145
20 to 29 yrs	24		<hr/>
30 to 39 yrs	11		
40 to 49 yrs	11		
50 to 59 yrs	29		
60 to 69 yrs	11		
70 yrs +	15		
Not stated	-		
	<hr/>		
	106		
	<hr/>		

3. Method of DEATH

Overdose	
Barbiturate	7
Barbiturate + Alcohol	22
Other sedative	1
Anti-Depressant	2
Alcohol alone	1
Other Drugs	3
Fall from height	15
Drowning	9
Train - struck or fell from	6
Gassing	4
Head Injuries	2
Shooting	1
Electrocution	1
Blood Loss	1
Menangitis	1
Found Collapsed	1
Injuries (other)	3
Hanging	2
Cardiac failure	-
Broncho-pneumonia	-
Fall in shower	-
Unascertainable	24
	<hr/>
	106
	<hr/>

ACCIDENTAL (non-intended) DRUG DEATHS

Category No. 4

1. HARD DRUGS

	Inquest Held	Inquest Dispensed With	Total
Heroin	8	2	10
Morphine	5	2	7
Methodone	3	1	4
Phenoxoxne	-	1	1
	<u>16</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>22</u>

2. SEDATIVES/DEPRESSANTS

Chloral Hydrate elix-nocte	13	2	15
Barbiturate + alcohol	24	5	29
Diazepam + Alcohol	2	1	3
Mandrax	1	-	1
	<u>40</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>48</u>

3. ALCOHOL ALONE

Alcohol poisoning	-	2	2
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4. OTHER DRUGS

Insulin	1	-	1
Promethazine	1	-	1
Dextropropoxyphene	2	-	2
Butobarbitone	-	1	1
Pentobarbitone	-	3	3
Phenobarbitone	-	1	1
Paracetamol	-	1	1
Dazepam	-	2	2
Methodone	-	2	2
Oxazepath	-	2	2
Lignscaine	-	1	1
Amylobarbitane	-	1	1
Quengiloberbitone	-	2	2
Methqualone	-	1	1
Dextramorphamide	-	1	1
Nordlozepam	-	1	1
	<u>4</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>23</u>

5. SEX

	Inquest Held	Inquest Dispensed With	Total
Male	32	9	41
Female	28	7	35
	<u>60</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>76</u>

6. AGE

to 12 yrs	-	-	-
13 to 19 yrs	7	1	8
20 to 29 yrs	30	6	36
30 to 39 yrs	9	3	12
40 to 49 yrs	4	1	5
50 to 59 yrs	5	3	8
60 to 69 yrs	3	2	5
70 yrs +	2	-	2
	<u>60</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>76</u>

7. EXPANSION OF THE HARD DRUG SCENE

Total "accidental" drug deaths

Drug	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Morphine	7	13	7	10	7
Heroin	10	13	6	13	10
Methadone	4	1	2	6	4
Palfium	-	1	1	1	-
Cocaine	-	1	-	-	-
Pethidine	-	1	-	-	-
Phenoxoxone	-	-	-	-	1
	<u>21</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>22</u>
Total	21	30	16	30	22

ACCIDENTAL DROWNINGS

Category No. 5

	<u>INQUEST HELD</u>	<u>INQUEST DISPENSED WITH</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>INQUEST HELD</u>	<u>INQUEST DISPENSED WITH</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1. SEX				5. ALCOHOL			
Male	26	4	30	<u>IN</u>			
Female	<u>7</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>BLOOD</u>			
	33	4	37	Nil			
				including			
				children	19	2	21
2. AGE				Below 0.08%	-	-	-
To 5 yrs	9	-	9	0.08% +	9	2	11
6 to 12 yrs	2	-	2	Not			
13 to 19 yrs	4	-	4	known	<u>5</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5</u>
20 to 29 yrs	1	1	2		33	4	37
30 to 39 yrs	4	-	4	6. CIRCUMSTANCES			
40 to 49 yrs	5	-	5	Home			
50 to 59 yrs	3	3	6	Pools			
60 to 69 yrs	3	-	3	< 5 yrs	7	-	7
70 +	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u>	> 5 yrs	2	2	4
	33	4	37	Public			
				Pools			
				< 5 yrs	1	-	1
3. SWIMMING				> 5 yrs	-	-	-
<u>ABILITY</u>				Open Sea	4	-	4
Good	9	-	9	Surf	1	-	1
Fair	4	-	4	Skin			
Slight	1	2	3	Diver	-	-	-
Nil				River	7	-	7
including				Still			
Children	10	-	10	water	3	-	3
Not				Drunken			
known	7	1	8	falls into			
N.A.	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	water	1	-	1
	33	4	37	Boating &			
				Canoeing	2	-	2
				Bath			
4. COUNTRY OF				< 5 yrs	-	-	-
<u>ORIGIN</u>				> 5 yrs	2	1	3
Australia	28	2	30	Accidental			
England	-	-	-	fall into			
Scotland	-	1	1	harbour -			
Lebanon	1	-	1	rockfisher-			
Austria	1	-	1	man	1	1	2
Greece	1	-	1	Accidental fall			
Italy	1	1	2	into storm-			
Not known	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>	water canal	1	-	1
	33	4	37	Child's head			
				in bucket			
				of water	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>
					33	4	37

7. HOME POOL DROWNINGS

	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Under 5 yrs	10	10	9	7	7
Total drownings	59	53	49	44	37
Proportion	17%	19%	18%	16%	19%

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT DEATHS

CATEGORIES 6. 7. & 8

TOTAL = 346

STATUS	DRIVER		PASSENGER		MOTOR CYCLE RIDER		PILION PASSENGER		PEDAL CYCLE OR SCOOTER		PEDESTRIANS		TOTAL								
	IH	IDW	TOT	IH	IDW	TOT	IH	IDW	TOT	IH	IDW	TOT	IH	IDW	TOT						
Male	49	25	74	29	0	29	46	14	60	5	-	5	9	1	10	65	18	83	203	58	261
Female	12	7	19	21	2	23	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	39	3	42	73	12	85
	61	32	93	50	2	52	46	14	60	6	-	6	9	1	10	104	21	125	276	70	346
To 12 years	-	-	-	6	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	17	4	21	24	4	28
13 - 19 years	10	2	12	8	1	9	11	3	14	4	-	4	5	-	5	6	-	6	44	6	50
20 - 29 years	21	12	33	15	-	15	25	11	36	2	-	2	1	1	2	7	1	8	71	25	96
30 - 39 years	7	5	12	4	-	4	8	-	8	-	-	-	1	-	1	6	4	10	26	9	35
40 - 49 years	10	4	14	1	-	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	2	9	20	6	26
50 - 59 years	1	1	2	6	1	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	15	6	21	23	8	31
60 - 69 years	9	3	12	5	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	1	13	26	4	30
70 years +	3	5	8	5	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34	3	37	42	8	50
TOTAL	61	32	93	50	2	52	46	14	60	6	-	6	9	1	10	104	21	125	276	70	346
A Not known	15	2	17	19	-	19	10	1	11	2	-	2	1	1	2	20	3	23	67	7	74
L Nil (including children)	23	14	37	21	2	23	17	4	21	-	-	-	7	-	7	61	10	71	129	30	159
C Below .08%	5	1	6	1	-	1	4	3	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3	12	5	17
O .08 - .150%	6	1	7	7	-	7	9	2	11	4	-	4	1	-	1	7	-	7	34	3	37
H .151 - .250%	12	8	20	2	-	2	5	4	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	4	16	31	16	47
O .251% +	-	6	6	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	5	3	9	12
TOTAL	61	32	93	50	2	52	46	14	60	6	-	6	9	1	10	104	21	125	276	70	346

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.

I.H. Inquest Held

I.D.W. Inquest Disposed With

OTHER ACCIDENTS Category No. 9

	<u>Inquest held</u>	<u>Inquest dispensed with</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>Inquest held</u>	<u>Inquest Dispensed With</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1. FALLS				2. BURNS (CONTINUED)			
From rail platform	-	1	1	Chlorine & brake fluid mixed-explosion	1	-	1
Drunken	12	1	13	Welding - ignite drum of solvent	1	-	1
At work	1	2	3	Solvent ignited in bathroom	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>
From train	5	1	6		<u>20</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>25</u>
From bus	-	1	1	3. SUFFOCATION			
From building	4	3	7	Smoke from fire in house	3	-	3
From cliff	1	1	2	Suffocation by plastic bag	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>
From ladder	1	-	1		<u>4</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4</u>
From window	-	1	1	4. INJURIES			
Down stairs	1	3	4	Caught between two trains	2	-	2
Aged down stairs	-	2	2	Hit or run over by train	7	2	9
Aged from bed	4	2	6	Struck by tree	-	1	1
Aged while walking	3	5	8	Hit by boat	1	-	1
Aged in shower	-	1	1	Crushed by truck	2	-	2
Mentally retarded	-	1	1	Crushed by car	1	-	1
From bridge	1	-	1	Hit by a bank of lights	1	1	2
From crane	1	-	1	Radiator fan	1	1	2
Into crushing pan	1	-	1	Hit by crane	1	1	2
From cycle	1	-	1	Explosion on boat whilst refuel	1	1	2
In private hospital	1	-	1	Crushed by paper rolls	1	1	2
Rail walkway	1	-	1	Entangled in tractor drive shaft	-	1	1
Fall in hotel	1	-	1	Hit by a sheet of fibre glass	1	1	2
Not described	2	-	2		<u>19</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>29</u>
	<u>41</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>66</u>				
2. BURNS							
Fell causing hot tap to go on	1	-	1				
Smoking in bed/chair	10	2	12				
House on fire	2	-	2				
Bath	-	1	1				
Shower	1	1	2				
Radiator	1	-	1				
Petrol in car caught fire	-	1	1				
Using petrol cleaner - ignited	1	-	1				
Burning rubbish nylon nightie	1	-	1				

OTHER ACCIDENTS (CONTINUED)

	<u>Inquest held</u>	<u>Inquest dispensed with</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
5. <u>GASSED</u>			
Gas in confined space in garage	1	-	1
Gas left on or not ignited	5	4	9
Working on gas pipe in ground - inhaled gas	-	1	1
	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>11</u>
6. <u>ELECTROCUTION</u>			
Faulty appliance in cord	6	1	7
Using unsafe welder	1	-	1
Whilst working	1	-	1
Whilst working on live wire	1	-	1
Tawn roller	1	-	1
Hit hanging wires	1	-	1
Vehicle in contact with o/h lines	1	-	1
In contact with plug	1	1	2
	<u>13</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>15</u>
7. <u>FOOD</u>			
Choking	3	-	3
8. <u>STRANGULATION</u>			
Auto-eroticism	1	-	1
9. <u>OTHERS</u>			
Asphyxia	1	-	1
Inhalation of vomitus whilst drunk	2	-	2
Medical	1	-	1
Kicked by horse	2	-	2
Cardiac Arrest - caught between bed and when trying to get out of bed	1	-	1
Internal blood loss	1	-	1
Shooting	1	-	1
Crushed by motor vehicle	1	-	1
During a fit	1	-	1
	<u>11</u>		<u>11</u>