



## CORONER'S COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

OUR REF:

YOUR REF: A462761

Mr Mathew Bates  
Principal Research Officer  
Education and Health Standing Committee  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr Bates

### **Inquiry into mental health impacts of FIFO work arrangements**

I refer to correspondence dated 22 August 2014 from, Dr G. G. Jacobs, MLA, Chairman of the Education and Health Standing Committee to the State Coroner regarding the inquiry into mental health impact on FIFO work arrangements.

The State Coroner has asked me to respond on her behalf.

The Coroner's Court is unable to provide data on "open" cases because a reportable death, irrespective of the apparent circumstances, is not a suicide until determined by a Coroner.

From the outset it is important to point out that the Coroner's Court case management system is case specific and does not have the facility to conduct text searches or run complex data sets. Data is provided in a manner which prevents identification of the deceased person.

The following information in response to Questions (a) and (b) has been obtained from the National Coronial Information System (NCIS) as a special request search query and relates to "closed" cases only.

The search method used was as follows:

#### **1. Query Design Keyword Searches**

Jurisdiction = WA

Intent (Notification & Completion) = Intentional Self Harm

Date Notified = 01/01/2008 - 30/06/2014

Plus keyword searches (Police, Autopsy, Findings):



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1. "FIFO"
2. "fly in" & "fly out"

### 2. Query Design (no keyword searches)

Jurisdiction = WA

Intent (Notification & Completion) = Intentional Self Harm

Age (from 17 years)

Date Notified = 01/07/2008 - 30/06/2014

### Cases included:

Confirmation of FIFO work being undertaken by the deceased; either via 'Occupation Code / Occupation Text' field, or by attached case reports.

### Cases also included:

Cases where occupation was *suggestive* of FIFO roster work (eg 'miner', 'mine worker', 'rigger' etc), but where no further information was included in case reports to substantiate this.

### Important Note:

Due to the following factors, there may be a likelihood of **under-reporting** of results for this search:

- Accuracy and detail of information provided in case documentation;
- Rate of Document Attachment for each case (particularly for cases 2013 - 2014);
- Accuracy and detail of information provided in NCIS 'Occupation Code' / 'Occupation Text' Field.

## QUESTIONS

- (a) Does the Coroner collect information about employment at time of death?

**Answer** - Yes, information is captured on the case management system but employment is not always searchable. Such information is usually collected by police on behalf of the Coroner and is incorporated into the police investigation report. Similarly information as to whether or not a person is a FIFO worker is captured in the same manner.



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(b) If so, please provide the number of individuals working in FIFO occupations that committed suicide for each of the following financial years:

**Answer -**

- (i) 2008-09 = 4 (3)
- (ii) 2009-10 = 0
- (iii) 2010-11 = 4 (1)
- (iv) 2011-12 = 9 (1)
- (v) 2012-13 = 7 (1)
- (vi) 2013-14 = 0

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**Totals = 24(7)**

The search query identified a total of **24** cases of intentional self harm leading to death. The numbers in brackets (**7**) shows the number of cases where the word FIFO was a unique identifier in the search query. In all other cases the stated occupation e.g. driller, miner, shot firer, rigger etc. was taken to be *suggestive* of an occupation associated with that of a fly-in, fly-out worker.

The table below shows factors in involved in the death. It will be seen of the 24 cases identified 21 cases had one or more factors involved in the death.

Factors involved in the death	Mental Health	Workplace	Domestic Relationship	Drugs/Alcohol
1	✓		✓	✓
2	✓		✓	
3		✓		✓
4				✓
5		✓		
6	✓			
7			✓	
8	✓		✓	✓
9	✓		✓	✓
10			✓	
11	✓			✓
12	✓	✓		✓
13	✓		✓	✓
14	✓			
15	✓	✓		✓
16	✓			✓
17	✓			✓
18	✓			
19	✓	✓	✓	✓
20	✓		✓	
21	✓		✓	



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- (c) If this information is not available, the Committee would welcome any general commentary relating to suicide rates amongst FIFO workers that the Coroner feels would assist the Committee in its inquiry.

**Answer** - The State Coroner acknowledges and respects the Committee and appreciates the reason for the inquiry. The Coroner politely declines from making any comment outside of a courtroom setting which may perceptively cause bias or prejudice the inquiry.

Thank you for your consideration in seeking the State Coroner's input, and please contact the Coroner's Office if you require any further information or clarification regarding this matter.

Yours faithfully

Gary Cooper  
**PRINCIPAL REGISTRAR**

22 September 2014