

# FAQs: How to search the Australian Health News Research Collaboration (AHNRC) TV database

Updated 10 September 2010

## A: Background information

**When did the database commence?** It contains material from May 2005 onwards.

**What is the latest material that is available?** The latest material is generally about 4-6 weeks old. This is because of the sheer volume of material we must edit and classify.

**What stations are included in the database?** We only record the five primary “free-to-air” channels broadcast out of Sydney (ie: ABC1, SBS1, 10, 9 and 7). We record all prime time news, current affairs, discussion programs, documentaries, as well as some “magazine/lifestyle” and “reality TV” that include health related topics. We do not record the secondary free-to-air channels (including the ABC’s new 24 hour news channel), nor any pay TV.

**What topics do we include?** Basically, we record and save anything overtly to do with health or medicine. However, this can be less straightforward than it seems. Broader topics relevant to health (eg, road safety, poverty, housing, employment, transport, education and child development) are not included in the database unless they contain explicit reference to a health issue or outcome. For example, reports of motor vehicle accidents are included when death or injury is mentioned, but not when a report only covers resultant traffic congestion. Reports about alcohol and drugs are included only if they describe death, illness or injury (rather than issues relating to law and order). Occupational and domestic deaths and injuries are included, but those caused by airline, or maritime incidents, natural disasters, war, assault or other criminal conduct are not, as in media research they are traditionally subsumed under their more fundamental news categories. Climate change reports are included only if explicit mention is given to predicted health consequences in more than a passing reference (e.g. disease outbreak after a flood).

**What programs do we record?** Programs relevant to health come and go over the years. Basically, we record all prime time news and current affairs items relevant to health. We also record documentaries, reality TV programs which are directly relevant to health (eg: The Biggest Loser; RPA).

**What is missing from the database?** We record two breakfast television news/interview programs (Channels 7 and 9), but not ABC. This is simply a resourcing decision – we do not have sufficient staff to get everything. We do not record daytime TV, but resume recording with the early evening news bulletins.

We do not record material over the Christmas break other than the half hour prime time news bulletins. Each year, this varies, but usually, it extends from the last working day before Christmas until the first working day back after the New Year public holiday (i.e. approx Dec 23- Jan 2).

We have also had occasional data storage failures. These occurred:

- **September 2007 - August 2008:** Some weeks are incomplete. In some weeks only data for 1 or 2 channels (e.g. 7 and ABC) are present. Not all weeks suffer from this problem.
- **2009: Channel 9 has no data from 4 May-18 June; Channel 10 has no data from 27 April-2 July**

This means that if you wish to look at complete coverage of an issue over a period, you should consider starting your data collection after these periods, or else construct a sampling framework that takes them into account.

### **B: Searching the master EXCEL database**

**How do I read the project's master EXCEL spreadsheet?** The [master spreadsheet](#) is updated each week. It has a (vertical) row for each story and twenty (horizontal) columns that detail various aspects of the source and content for each story. The column headings and what they mean are listed below.

**Year:** refers to the year in which the story was broadcast.

**Title:** the project's Digital Media Editor, Simon Holding, gives each story a title when it first appears in the news, and retains this throughout the story's life, for ease of searching. (So for instance, any stories about swine 'flu will be titled 'H1N1 Outbreak in Mexico', even after the virus had spread to other countries.)

**Channel:** provides information about the network on which the program appeared.

**Time of program:** gives the time, in 24-hour format, at which the program was broadcast.

**Duration:** the length of the program or clip, in minutes and seconds.

**Date:** gives the date on which the program was broadcast.

**Type:** specifies the type of program (generally – news, current affairs, documentary or reality TV).

**Program:** the title of the program.

**“Main” 1 and 2 and “Sub” 1, 2, 3, 4:**

The next set of column headings (Main 1 and 2, and Sub 1-4) relate to the topics covered in each clip. Each clip is coded by our Digital Media Editor working from two coding guides: one for “main content” and the other for “specific content”. After coding about 10,000 clips, we cleaned the data and settled on a set of 21 “main” content categories, including a “miscellaneous” category for stories that do not really fit sensibly into the other 20 categories. In addition, there are about 250 sub-categories which help to describe the story in more specific ways.

All stories have at least one but sometimes two “main content” codes, and at least one but up to four “sub-category” codes. So, for example, a story on breast cancer which was about an awareness campaign for Indigenous women would be categorised under “cancer” for main content, and also under “educational campaigns”, “Indigenous health” and possibly “women’s health” as well.

It is important to note that there is no hierarchy to the allocation of main or sub-categories – so, for instance, if four sub-categories are chosen for a particular story, the first and the fourth may be equally important. The coding process facilitates searching within the database; it does not arbitrate the relative ‘weight’ of various elements within the story.

There is inevitably some subjectivity involved in how our coder classifies a story because he has to make many judgements every day about what he is viewing and how it should be categorised. This means that if you wish to be sure that you have located every possible occurrence of a story about a given topic, that you should experiment with various search strategies using different search strings, and note any extra occurrences that fall outside the initial categorisations. You can download a copy of the database and build your own secondary file containing all the material that interests you.

**Keywords:** includes some brief descriptors such as the story’s location, major players, organisations, associations or type of incident. The keyword may also occasionally include subcategories that did not fit into the four available fields. These can be important for you in conducting additional searches to ensure you have found everything about your topic.

**News Actor Types:** describes, in general terms, the kinds of people who appear in the story, such as politicians, researchers, police, parents, sportspeople, patients, etc.

**News Actor Names:** where the story is about, or features, named individuals, this field names them.

**Location Folder:** this descriptor is for internal use only and can be ignored for search purposes.

File Name: is for internal use only and can be ignored for search purposes.

### **C: How to view the videos**

To search and view the videos, go here:

<http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/public-health/AHNRC/videos>

If you have not used the site before, you will first need to register and show that you are a researcher from an institution which has Screenrights License (most Australian universities have these). We will then approve your access within 48hrs and you will then be able to search, view and save the clips that interest you.

Note that the first time you click on a clip to view it, it can take time while the cache loads, particularly if it is a long documentary item. Subsequent clicks on the same video will be much quicker.

Searching can be simple or complex. You can fill in just one search field window, or as many as you wish – putting conditions on your search. The more search conditions you enter, the fewer clips will be returned because your search terms will be more specific. Broad search terms may return many 100s of clips, while more targeted searching may be more manageable.

Please direct all enquiries, comments and reports about problems or “obvious” coding errors here: [ahnrc-web-admin@mcs.usyd.edu.au](mailto:ahnrc-web-admin@mcs.usyd.edu.au)