

Speech Notes: Cathryn Ashley-Jones, Deputy Government Statistician, Statistics NZ

Injury Information Forum 4 December 2009 Westpac Stadium

Tena koutou katoa and welcome to the first Statistics New Zealand Injury Information Forum.

I'd like to extend a special welcome to a number of people who have travelled to be with us today:

Firstly Dr Penny Allbon, our keynote speaker from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and our guests from the Australasian Mortality Data Interest Group.

Closer to home - a warm welcome to our other guest speakers who come from government departments, universities, community and business organisations. And to all participants.

Overall we have a diverse group of over 100 people here today.

We have benefitted greatly from collaborating with the Australasian Mortality Data Interest Group which has met over the last two days and discussed "Understanding Mortality Data: Reaping the rewards".

Why are we here?

We're all here today because we care.

We care about safer communities and better outcomes for people who are injured.

This doesn't mean we bubble wrap and regulate.

It means we use quality and useful information to make good decisions so we can focus our efforts where they are most needed.

We all know very well that injury is a leading cause of premature death and disability in New Zealand.

In the last year ACC accepted 1.8million claims for injuries.

While not all these injuries were catastrophic, they all impact in some way on the friends, families, colleagues and employers of those affected.

They also impact on the economy in that they cost – not only in fiscal terms but in lost productivity.

This is huge when you consider the size of the New Zealand population of just over 4.3 million people.

And the irony of all of this is that most injuries and their consequences are preventable.

And what does this mean in relation to injury information?

At Statistics New Zealand it's all about the data!

We are the country's statistical agency and produce a huge range of key economic and social data.

You will know us for measures such as the Consumers Price Index, GDP and now the information on social wellbeing outcomes from the General Social Survey.

We have been providing a measure of New Zealand since 1840 and as an independent agency since 1936.

We take great pride and care in the data we produce.

Quality statistics which are easily accessed and internationally comparable are the hallmark of a modern democracy.

While we produce a raft of information we are not the only producer of official statistics.

The government in recognising our key role has tasked us with leadership of the official statistical system.

In this role we are able to work with other agencies and ensure that "official" statistics meet agreed comparable standards both nationally and internationally.

It is from this perspective that Statistics New Zealand has been charged with the statutory role of Injury Information Manager.

This means we must provide both leadership and coordination in the collection and dissemination of injury statistics.

Good quality data provides a better understanding of the nature of injury.

It gives the ability to measure and monitor injury prevention initiatives, along with treatment and rehabilitation outcomes.

Overall it looks to assist in minimising the personal, social and economic costs of injury.

This does not mean it is an easy task.

The New Zealand Injury Prevention Strategy provides the government's strategic framework and direction for improving New Zealand's injury prevention performance.

To ensure that key and relevant information is collected in a cohesive and standardised way, agencies which have a role in injury prevention need to work together within the context of the strategy. Six government agencies (Transport, Health, ACC, Justice, MSD and Labour) lead the development and implementation of separate strategies and action plans for each priority area.

In addition the strategy serves as a guide for injury prevention activities initiated by local government and NGOs.

Statistics New Zealand has a key role in advancing the knowledge base objective in the strategy. Good measures and easy access to information assist in good outcomes and provide a better understanding of the nature of injury.

Relevancy and standardisation are the cornerstones of good data collection.

And in order to remain responsive, in 2008 Statistics New Zealand undertook a review of the Official Injury Information Programme.

This review aimed to evaluate current and future information needs, identify the implications of the needs, and agree the priorities for action.

We consulted with many stakeholders, agreed an Injury Information Programme, and are working with a renewed focus. As the Injury Information Manager our focus is working across government, providing leadership and direction to a sector-agreed programme of work around collecting and disseminating information.

To start, we are building on what information we are currently collecting and making injury information more accessible, consistent and useful. The agenda for action includes:

- Documenting core injury datasets
- Injury outcome monitoring
- Improved information on serious injury

A highlight during the week was the Injury Information Portal going live. This Portal brings together (in a single place) information about New Zealand injury datasets. Data from the key agencies is seen together and it will grow and develop. Visit it on the Statistics New Zealand website.

I am hoping that from today you will leave with a better knowledge of the progress that has been made in injury information across the sector.

Take the opportunity to meet with others in the injury information sector and share your knowledge and skills.

We want to continuously improve what we are doing - so we want to hear from you about how we can we can all work together to make advances towards our overall shared vision of

"A safe New Zealand becoming injury free"

I'd now like to introduce Dr Penny Allbon, our keynote speaker.

Penny is the Director of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, a government agency providing national data and analysis across Australia.

Penny is a New Zealander who studied at Massey University before completing a PhD in Tongan history at the ANU in Canberra.

She has over twenty-five years of experience in government in Australia.

Among her former roles, she was Chief Executive of the ACT Health Department and has also run her own consultancy, working with government in various Pacific Islands.

Penny has a particular interest in translating the needs of policy makers into relevant data analysis and ensuring that data is both user-friendly and timely.

She is going to talk to us today about measuring injury in Australia, with some comments on drivers into the future from a trans-Tasman perspective.

Thank you for joining us Penny and welcome home.

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