INTRODUCTION

The Fatal Road Crash Database (FRCD) is an initiative of the Road Safety section of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), and is now maintained by the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM). The FRCD contains detailed information about every road fatality in Australia since 2000. The information collected about these fatal incidents includes characteristics of all vehicles and persons involved, as well as the road conditions at the time of the crash. This paper will explore the level of information available on the FRCD, provide some example trends using the data, outline limitations with information collection, and how to apply to access the FRCD.

METHODS

1. In order to obtain data from the FRCD to examine particular trends and patterns, a number of queries were performed on the Access Database which contains FRCD data. The template record book was used to select fields of interest and translate the coded results. The Query Design Screen on Access was used to build these queries, and only crashes where the year was 2000-2005 and where the fields ‘Sufficient Information’ and ‘Coded’ were set to ‘Yes’ were selected.

2. To examine some of the limitations associated with coding data on the NCIS, a review of all data fields contained on the FRCD was performed. Additional discussions were held with the FRCD coders to outline limitations associated with the collection of data for the FRCD.

3. Discussions with the Road Safety Section of the ATSB, and the VIFM Executive were held to determine the appropriate processes for external research groups to apply to access data from the FRCD.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The examples of data able to be produced using the FRCD (crashes by crash location type, and by natural light) demonstrates the detailed data about the circumstances surrounding fatal crash events that is available through the FRCD. See Figures 1 and 2.

2. Broad assessment of field completion rates showed that fields such as the licence type of the driver, the state of licence issue, the vehicle year, the timing of death, and whether drugs were tested for, were some of the least frequently available data fields with respect to the information collected on the FRCD.

In general, the main limitations surrounding the collection of data about road crash fatalities relates to the lack of detail available in source documentation. In the jurisdictions where data on the National Coroners Information System (NCIS) is able to be supplemented by police full crash reports, the data on the system is much more comprehensive.

3. Access protocols have been determined. As long as users will not require information that could be considered identifying and will not be undertaking data matching, a direct access process without Ethics Approval will be sufficient. If such data or uses are required, consideration by the Victorian Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee will be necessary. Fees will apply for access to FRCD data.
CONCLUSIONS

Despite limitations on the comprehensiveness of certain data fields on the FRCD, it is anticipated that external access to this data will provide a valuable resource for researchers to describe fatal road crashes in Australia, to monitor trends and emerging issues in road safety, as well as to enable the evaluation of specific countermeasures and intervention strategies.