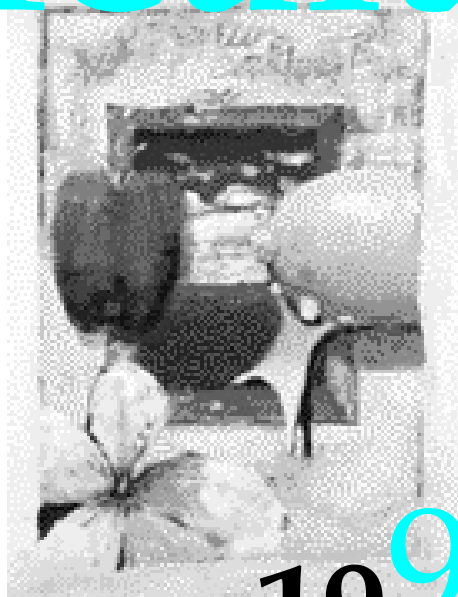


AUSTRALIA'S  
**Health**



**1998**

The sixth biennial health report  
of the Australian Institute  
of Health and Welfare

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Canberra

AIHW Cat. No. AUS 10

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**Australian Institute of Health and Welfare**

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The Institute is an independent health and welfare statistics and information agency in the Commonwealth Health and Family Services portfolio. The Institute's mission is to inform community discussion and decision making through national leadership in the development and provision of authoritative and timely information and analysis on the health and welfare of Australians.

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The Hon Dr Michael Wooldridge MP  
Minister for Health and Family Services  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

The Institute is pleased to present to you *Australia's Health 1998*, a report containing statistics and related information concerning the health of the people of Australia and health services in Australia. The report is required under the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*.

Yours sincerely

Professor Janice Reid  
Chairperson of the Board

1 June 1998

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The Institute wishes particularly to thank those people from other organisations who have contributed to *Australia's Health 1998*.



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## Preface

Welcome to the sixth edition of *Australia's Health*, the two-yearly summary of information on health in Australia. It is now regarded as Australia's most authoritative source on patterns of health and illness, the supply and use of health services, and their cost and performance.

The present edition reports specifically on Australia's five national health priority areas: cancer control, cardiovascular health, injury prevention and control, mental health and diabetes.

*Australia's Health 1998* continues to report Australia's high health status overall, but also continuing poor Indigenous health and the lower health status of people living in rural and remote areas.

*Australia's Health* and its companion, *Australia's Welfare*, are the cornerstones of information on current health and welfare issues in Australia. The Institute is required by law to produce these reports every 2 years, as part of its mission to inform community discussion and policy debate on health and welfare issues in Australia. The Institute intends to keep these publications at the forefront of its work, so that public debate can take place against a background of factual and objective information.

Health and health care is always the subject of vigorous debate in Australia. Some commentators argue that Australia's health services are of very high quality by world standards and are accessible to those who need them. Others express concern about waiting time, about the frequency of quality lapses, or whether current practice is sufficiently based on scientific evidence. There is debate about the role and relationships between institutional and community-based services and about the contribution of public health action. Arguments about who should pay are always part of these debates. These matters are as pertinent to individual consumers as they are to health professionals, planners and purchasers, funders and service providers.

*Australia's Health* cannot of itself deliver answers on these issues. But the facts it contains hopefully will be equally useful to all parties and so make a major contribution to 'healthy' debate.

The 1998 edition is the product of the hard work of many in the Institute and some from other organisations. My thanks to all of them. Tony Wood, as editor, had the task of bringing the many contributions together and deserves special thanks.

Richard Madden  
Director

