

Introduction

The *National Health Data Dictionary (NHDD)* was first published as *the National Minimum Data Set – Institutional Health Care* in September 1989. In March 1993 the *National Health Data Dictionary – Institutional Health Care (Version 2.0)* was published. Since the establishment of the first National Health Information Agreement in June 1993 there have been many changes in the development and management of national health information resulting in the expansion of both the scope and content of the seven subsequent versions of the *National Health Data Dictionary*. The National Health Information Agreement was renewed in 1998 for a further five-year term.

Under the National Health Information Agreement, the *National Health Data Dictionary* is the authoritative source of health data definitions used in Australia where national consistency is required. The Dictionary is designed to improve the comparability of data across the health field. It is also designed to make data collection activities more efficient by reducing duplication of effort in the field, and more effective by ensuring that information to be collected is appropriate to its purpose.

The objectives of the *National Health Data Dictionary* are to:

- establish a core set of uniform definitions relating to the full range of health services and a range of population parameters (including health status and determinants);
- promote uniformity, availability, reliability, validity, consistency and completeness in the data;
- accord with nationally and internationally agreed protocols and standards, wherever possible;
- promote the national standard definitions by being readily available to all individuals and organisations involved in the generation, use and/or development of health and health services information.

The National Health Data Committee is responsible for coordinating the development and revision of the *National Health Data Dictionary*.

The National Health Data Committee (NHDC)

The National Health Data Committee is a standing committee of the National Health Information Management Group – a body established under the National Health Information Agreement to oversee implementation of the Agreement. All data element definitions to be included in the *National Health Data Dictionary* require endorsement by the National Health Information Management Group.

The primary role of the National Health Data Committee is to assess data definitions proposed for inclusion in the *National Health Data Dictionary* and to make recommendations to the National Health Information Management Group on revisions and additions to each successive version of the Dictionary. In particular, the Committee's role is to ensure that the *National Health Data Dictionary* definitions comply with endorsed standards for the definition of data elements and that all data definitions being considered for the Dictionary have undergone sufficient national consultation with recognised experts and stakeholders in the relevant field.

The rules applied to each data element definition are designed to ensure that each definition is clear, concise, comprehensive and provides sufficient information to ensure that all those who collect, provide, analyse and use the data understand its meaning.

All definitions in the *National Health Data Dictionary* are presented in a format that is described in more detail at Appendix B.

The National Health Data Committee comprises representatives of:

- the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing
- each State and Territory government health authority
- the Australian Bureau of Statistics
- the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- the Australian Private Hospitals' Association
- the private health insurance industry (through Lysaght's Hospital and Medical Club)
- the Department of Veterans' Affairs;
- the National Centre for Classification in Health;
- the Health Insurance Commission; and
- Other members designated by the National Health Information Management Group.

The National Health Information Management Group (NHIMG) appoints the Chair of the National Health Data Committee, currently Mr Ching Choi of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

A list of Committee members and their contact details (as at 1 March 2002) is provided at Appendix A.

The National Health Data Committee does not normally develop data definitions directly. Rather, it provides a channel through which standards emerging from nationally-focused data development work are documented and endorsed by the National Health Information Management Group. This facilitates implementation in national data collections and allows wider availability to stakeholders in the national health information arena. The range and relevance of the data definitions included in the *National Health Data Dictionary* are dependent, to a significant extent, on the material submitted to the National Health Data Committee by the expert working groups that are actively developing data in the health field.

More information about the National Health Data Committee and its processes is available from the Secretariat (see the end of this section).

The Knowledgebase—Australia's health, community services and housing metadata registry

The Knowledgebase—Australia's health, community services and housing metadata registry is an electronically accessible registry of national data definitions. The Knowledgebase was designed and created by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on behalf of the National Health Information Management Group.

Organisations that may place data definitions into the Knowledgebase are given the status of 'Registration Authority'. The organisation authorised to register *National Health Data Dictionary* data definitions in the Knowledgebase is the National Health Information Management Group. The organisation authorised to register *National Community Services Data Dictionary* data definitions in the Knowledgebase is the National Community Services Information Management Group.

The Knowledgebase is also a registry for other registration authorities approved by the relevant national information management groups. These other groups are allowed to have data definitions with 'DRAFT' status only. DRAFT definitions are not available in print form.

The Knowledgebase integrates and presents information about:

- the *National Health Data Dictionary*;
- National Minimum Data Set agreements;
- National Health Performance Indicators;
- the National Health Information Model;
- the National Community Services Information Model;
- the *National Community Services Data Dictionary*;
- proposed data sets under development; and
- related data dictionaries from other organisations.

The integrating features of the Knowledgebase enable information managers and policy developers to query and view information in ways not possible with traditional paper-based records, repositories, dictionaries or manuals. It is envisaged that, over time, access to the *National Health Data Dictionary* will be primarily electronic – via the Knowledgebase.

The Knowledgebase is an Internet application, accessible through any browser compatible with HTML version 3.2 or later. It has been written using Oracle's Webserver technology.

The Internet address for the Knowledgebase – Australia's Health and Community Services Metadata Registry is

<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Select **Knowledgebase** from the 'Choose a portal' drop down list.

National Health Data Dictionary

All data definitions that are included in the latest version of the *National Health Data Dictionary* as well as all previous versions of those data definitions are available on the Knowledgebase. DRAFT data definitions under development by the National Health Data Committee are also available on the Knowledgebase under the National Health Data Committee as Registration Authority.

Version 11

The publication format for Version 11 differs from Version 10 in that it does not contain the full set of data elements and is set out in the following sections:

- Summary of changes
- Modified National Minimum Data Sets;
- National Minimum Data Sets;
- New data elements;
- Modified data elements;

To reference the NHDD in its entirety one must read both books in conjunction; Version 10 and this one. Alternatively, the full version may be referenced from the Knowledgebase on the AIHW web site. This is the address (URL) of the National Health Metadata page on the web site: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/knowledgebase/indexkbhealth.html>

Select *National Health Data Dictionary (NHDD)* from this page to get to the search page for the latest version of the NHDD. An 'Advanced Search' facility is available from the NHDD page or select by alphabet.

