

National Health Data Dictionary

Version 10

National Health Data Committee

2001

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
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Foreword

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is pleased to produce this tenth version of the *National Health Data Dictionary*, which is a vital tool for use in ensuring the quality of Australian health data.

The Dictionary is now ten years old. A decade of growth has seen it become a useful tool for the collection of health information across the nation. The next decade will see greater growth, and perhaps a shift in emphasis away from its base for standardised hospital data collections to a more all-encompassing set of data standards for the entire health sector.

Much of the drive for standardisation arises from Australia's various Health Care Agreements. With the growing cost of health care provision, there is a proportionately greater emphasis being placed on performance measurement. This requires national monitoring and reporting of standardised information to be effective. It is also becoming increasingly important to monitor the health and 'wellness' of the Australian population and there are many initiatives under way. The National Electronic Health Records Taskforce has proposed the concept of a national health information network (*HealthConnect*) that would allow personal health information to be collected, safely stored and exchanged – but only with the individual health consumer's permission. Under *HealthConnect*, health-related information about an individual would be collected in a standard, electronic format at the point of care (such as at a hospital or a general practitioner's clinic).

With initiatives such as these, it is important that the health care community maintains its ability to standardise the terminology used in the analysis of health information. It is only through the cooperation and consensus of Australia's health sector that it is possible to produce, in the Dictionary, a set of core definitions and data items for use in all Australian health data collections. The future will see this base broadened to incorporate the many other aspects of health information such as those included in the electronic health record mentioned above.

All Australian health departments, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the National Centre for Classification in Health, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Australian Private Hospitals Association, representatives of the private health insurance industry and the Health Insurance Commission cooperate in this endeavour.

Data elements in this edition continue to be presented in a format based on the ISO/IEC Standard 11179 *Specification and Standardization of Data Elements* – the international standard for defining data elements issued by the International Organization for Standardization and the International Electrotechnical Commission. As in Version 9, data elements are also presented according to their alignment to entities in the National Health Information Model.

Use of the Dictionary will help ensure that data elements are collected uniformly from all services and jurisdictions throughout Australia, and thereby improve the quality of information for community discussion and public policy debate on health issues in Australia.

Thanks are due to Joe Christensen and David Neilsen of the Institute staff who have prepared the material for this tenth edition, and to all members of the National Health Data Committee who have overseen its preparation.

I urge all collectors of health-related data in Australia to use the Dictionary and so improve the comparability and quality of Australian health data. The Dictionary content is expanding beyond institutional health care, and many of the new data elements relate to other sectors of health care.

The National Health Data Committee and the Institute continue to welcome comment on the Dictionary. Readers are encouraged to complete and return the lift-out feedback sheet included at the back of the Dictionary. In addition, should readers have any views on future improvements to the Dictionary, please contact the Institute so that the issues can be addressed.

Richard Madden
Director,
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

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Introduction

The *National Health Data Dictionary* 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; and
- 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

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 Aged Care
- each State and Territory government health authority
- the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- the Australian Bureau of Statistics
- 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
- other members designated by the National Health Information Management Group.

The National Health Information Management Group appoints the Chair of the National Health Data Committee, currently Geoff Sims of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

A list of Committee members and their contact details (as at February 2001) 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 for implementation in national data collections and made more widely available 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 address at 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 (formerly known as the National Health Information Knowledgebase or NHIK) is an electronically accessible registry of national data definitions. The organisation authorised to register *National Health Data Dictionary* data definitions in the Knowledgebase (that is, the Registration Authority) is the National Health Information Management Group. The Knowledgebase is also a registry for other Registration Authorities approved by the relevant national information management groups. 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
- 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.

All data definitions that are included in Version 10 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, but are not available in print form.

The Knowledgebase has been designed and created by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on behalf of the National Health Information Management Group. 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.

In line with advances in technology and the general move to on-line documentation and accessibility, this site may be extensively redesigned in the coming years

The Internet address for the Knowledgebase – Australia's health, community services and housing metadata registry is
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Version 10

This version of the Dictionary contains 286 data definitions, including 15 new data elements and the retirement of six data elements that have been agreed by the members of the National Health Data Committee, and endorsed by the National Health Information Management Group. As for Version 9, a full alphabetical listing of all data elements in this version of the Dictionary is provided at the front of this publication. In addition, a subject/key word index to this version of the Dictionary is provided at Appendix K.

This hard copy publication of Version 10 only includes data elements that are CURRENT as at 1 July 2001. However, all data elements including those that have been superseded or rendered obsolete by new data elements or new versions of data elements in Version 10 are available on the Knowledgebase.

As in Version 9, data definitions are presented in a format based on the standard ISO/IEC 11179 *Specification and Standardization of Data Elements* – the international standard for defining data elements issued by the International Organization for Standardization and the International Electrotechnical Commission. This format is explained in detail at Appendix B.

Version 10 continues the format of Version 9 in that all data elements are organised and presented according to their alignment with entities in the National Health Information Model (Version 2.0, Draft). The mapping of data elements to the Model is being progressively refined following consultation with stakeholders in the national health information field. This presentation format is designed to enhance the integration of the Model with the data elements – thus providing a more complete framework for understanding and implementing existing definitions and for identifying areas for further data development activity. A copy of the full National Health Information Model (Version 2.0, Draft) is included following this introductory section.

To assist with understanding the relationship between the data elements and their associated model entities, definitions of all entities in the National Health Information Model (Version 2.0, Draft) are provided at Appendix C.

Feedback

Readers are invited to comment on any aspect of the *National Health Data Dictionary* by completing and returning the lift-out feedback form included at the back of this publication.

Comments and suggestions can also be provided electronically via the Feedback area on the Knowledgebase.

Secretariat contact details

Further information about the *National Health Data Dictionary* and the National Health Data Committee can be obtained through the National Health Data Committee Secretariat at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

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