

National summary of the 2001 and 2002 jurisdictional reports against the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health performance indicators

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Canberra

AIHW cat. no. IHW 12

© Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced without prior written permission from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Requests and enquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be directed to the Head, Media and Publishing, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, GPO Box 570, Canberra ACT 2601.

A complete list of the Institute's publications is available from the Publications Unit, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, GPO Box 570, Canberra ACT 2601, or via the Institute's web site (<http://www.aihw.gov.au>).

ISBN 1 74024 383 8

Suggested citation

Statistical Information Management Committee 2004. National summary of the 2001 and 2002 jurisdictional reports against the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health performance indicators. AIHW cat. no. IHW 12. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Board Chair
Dr Sandra Hacker

Director
Dr Richard Madden

Any enquiries about or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Dr Fadwa Al-Yaman
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Unit
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
GPO Box 570
Canberra ACT 2601
Phone: (02) 6244 1146

Published by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Printed by PIRION Pty Ltd

Foreword

This report is the first report against the refined set of indicators endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) in 2000, and the fourth time that all jurisdictions have reported against a set of national performance indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. AHMAC produces these reports in order to inform policy makers and senior government officials on aspects of, and trends in, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare compiled this report for the Statistical Information Management Group on behalf of AHMAC.

The report demonstrates the need for ongoing, significant and concerted action on factors that contribute to the general health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It also shows that, while data quality has improved, further work remains to be done in this area before reports of this kind can include information on time trends and comparisons between jurisdictions.

AHMAC, through the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (SCATSIH) and the National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data, is actively supporting data development work to improve the quality of key health performance indicators. Work is also underway to improve the way we monitor health system performance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. SCATSIH is advising AHMAC on the policy context and implications of this report.

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of SCATSIH, and would like to take this opportunity to commend the many people involved in preparing the information provided.

Jim Birch
Chair
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

June 2004

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by a project team within the AIHW. The team comprised Fadwa Al-Yaman, Helen Johnstone, Justine Boland, Sally Middleton and Michelle Gourley. The team acknowledges that the successful completion of this report owes much to a number of committees, agencies and individuals.

Our thanks go to members of the following committees: the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (SCATSIH), the National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data (NAGATISHID) and the Statistical Information Management Committee (SIMC).

Specific thanks are also extended to the following people who coordinated data collection within their jurisdiction or agency and/or participated in the workshop on these National Performance Indicators: Kurrily Harrison and John Paice (Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing; Ray Mahoney (New South Wales Health Department), Mary Sullivan (Victorian Department of Human Services), Don Lewis and Anthony Dillon (Queensland Health), Selena Knowles (Western Australian Department of Health), Leanne Colby and Chris Gascoigne (South Australian Department of Human Services), Jeanette James (Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services), Gail Byron, Mohan Singh and Greg Pope (Australian Capital Territory Department of Health and Community Care), Steve Guthridge (Northern Territory Health Services), Jackie Hughes (Health Insurance Commission), Australian Bureau of Statistics (Jenny Coccetti, Danny Ford and Dan Black).

We wish to acknowledge the assistance of a number of staff within the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in particular Meredith Bryant, Therese Bourke and Brendan Sloane. Special thanks also go to Richard Madden, Ken Tallis, Tony Hynes and Jenny Hargreaves who provided valuable comments on the report.

Contents

- List of tablesviii
- List of figures xv
- Executive summaryxvii**
 - Areas of concern..... xvii
- Introduction 1**
 - Background..... 1
 - The conceptual framework..... 1
 - Quality and limitations of the indicators..... 2
 - Structure of the report 3
- Government inputs 4**
 - Introduction 5
 - Indicator 1. Efforts to improve identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in data collections 6
 - Indicator 2. Government expenditure on health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 15
 - Indicator 4. Government expenditure on, and description of, selected health promotion programs 23
- Determinants of health – social equity..... 32**
 - Introduction 33
 - Indicator 5. Life expectancy at birth..... 34
 - Indicator 6. Infant mortality rate 36
 - Indicator 7. Income poverty 38
 - Indicator 8. Completed secondary school education..... 40
 - Indicator 9. Employment status 42
 - Indicator 10. Housing with utilities..... 44
 - Indicator 11. People in prison custody 46
 - Indicator 12. The development of governance capacity in health 47
 - Indicator 13. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on health/hospital boards 52
 - Indicator 14. Reporting of complaints in hospitals 55

Determinants of health – access to services	59
Introduction.....	60
Indicator 15. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health services	61
Indicator 16. Distance to a primary health care centre	63
Indicator 17. Distance to a hospital	65
Indicator 18. Access to primary health care services – small homeland communities and outstations	66
Indicator 19. Management of key conditions.....	68
Indicator 20. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the health workforce	74
Indicator 21. Higher education and training in key health professions.....	79
Indicator 22. Workforce availability in primary health care services.....	83
Indicator 23. Workforce availability in hospitals	86
Indicator 24. Cross-cultural training for hospital staff	89
Determinants of health – risk markers	92
Introduction.....	93
Indicator 25. Pap smear screening.....	94
Indicator 26. Childhood immunisation rates	97
Indicator 28. Low-birthweight infants	99
Indicator 29. Smoking prevalence	101
Indicator 30. Alcohol consumption	103
Indicator 31. Overweight and obesity.....	106
Indicator 32. Child abuse and neglect.....	107
Indicator 35. Injuries presenting to hospital accident and emergency facilities	109
Outcomes for people	111
Introduction.....	113
Indicator 37. Notification rates for vaccine-preventable diseases.....	115
Indicator 38. Notification rates for meningococcal disease	116
Indicator 39. Notification rates for sexually transmissible diseases	117
Indicator 40. Ratios for all hospitalisations	119
Indicator 41. Hospitalisation ratios for circulatory diseases.....	121
Indicator 42. Hospitalisation ratios for injury and poisoning	128
Indicator 43. Hospitalisation ratios for respiratory diseases and lung cancer	139
Indicator 44. Hospitalisation ratios for diabetes.....	146

Indicator 45. Hospitalisation ratios for tympanoplasty associated with otitis media.....	153
Indicator 46. Hospitalisation ratios for mental health conditions.....	155
Indicator 47. Children’s hearing loss.....	162
Indicator 48. Stillbirths to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers	163
Indicator 49. Early adult death.....	164
Indicator 50. Age- and sex- specific all cause death rates and ratios.....	165
Indicator 51. Standardised mortality ratios for all causes.....	169
Indicator 52. Standardised mortality ratios for circulatory diseases.....	172
Indicator 53. Standardised mortality ratios for injury and poisoning.....	178
Indicator 54. Standardised mortality ratios for respiratory diseases and lung cancer ...	189
Indicator 55. Standardised mortality ratios for diabetes	196
Indicator 56. Standardised mortality ratios for cervical cancer.....	203
Appendix 1.....	205
Abbreviations.....	215
Symbols	216
References	217

List of tables

Table 2.1:	Australian Government, state and territory funding of health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 1998–99.....	17
Table 2.2:	Estimated expenditures per person, by source of funds and Indigenous status, 1998–99	18
Table 2.3:	Estimated annual expenditure on state-and territory-administered health services, by state and territory, 1998–99	19
Table 2.4:	Estimated per person funding by the Australian Government, state and territory health services, by Indigenous status, 1998–99	22
Table 4.1:	Expenditure on health promotion programs targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 2000–01 and 2001–02 (\$'000)	24
Table 5.1:	Experimental estimates of life expectancy at birth (years), by Indigenous status and sex, selected states and territories, 1999–01.....	34
Table 7.1:	Proportion of persons with household size-adjusted weekly incomes below the Australian 20th and 50th percentiles, by Indigenous status and state and territory, 2001.....	38
Table 8.1:	Number and proportion of people aged 20–24 years who completed Year 12 or equivalent, by sex, Indigenous status and state and territory, 2001	40
Table 9.1:	Labour force status of Indigenous persons aged 20–64 years, by state and territory, 2001.....	42
Table 10.1:	Number and proportion of permanent dwellings in discrete Indigenous communities by type of connection to water and electricity supply and sewerage systems, by state and territory, 2001.....	44
Table 11.1:	Rate of Indigenous imprisonment per 100,000, by state and territory, 30 June 2002	46
Table 15.1:	Number of and expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services, 2000–01 and 2001–02.....	62
Table 16.1:	Discrete Indigenous communities by distance to nearest community health clinic, for selected states and territories, 2001	63
Table 17.1:	Discrete Indigenous communities by distance to the nearest acute hospital, for selected states and territories, 2001	65
Table 18.1:	Number and proportion of communities with less than 50 people and more than 50 km from a community health clinic, by access to selected health professionals, for selected states and territories, 2001	67
Table 20.1:	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the health workforce, by state and territory, 2001	75
Table 21.1:	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders qualifying or currently enrolled in training and higher education, 2002	80
Table 21.2:	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders qualifying or currently in training and higher education, by state and territory, 2002.....	81

Table 22.1: Full-time equivalent positions employed by Australian Government-funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services, 30 June 2001	84
Table 23.1: Medical workforce numbers in acute care hospitals where more than 25% of separations are for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for selected states and territories, 2002	87
Table 26.1: The proportion of Indigenous children who were fully immunised at 1, 2 and 6 years of age, for selected states and territories, 30 June 2001 and 30 June 2002.....	97
Table 29.1: Smoking status of Indigenous adults aged 18 years and over, by age and sex, 2001.....	102
Table 30.1: Indigenous persons aged 18 years and over: by whether consumed alcohol, by age and sex, 2001.....	104
Table 30.2: Alcohol risk level: estimated average daily consumption of alcohol during the previous week.....	104
Table 30.3: Indigenous people aged 18 years and over who consumed alcohol: alcohol risk levels by age and sex, 2001	105
Table 31.1: Weight status: Indigenous adults aged 18 years and over based on body mass index, Australia 2001	106
Table 32.1: Children in child protection substantiations: number and rates per 1,000 children, by Indigenous status, by state and territory, 2001-02.....	107
Table 35.1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presentations at hospital accident and emergency facilities, for selected states and territories, by injury type, 2000-01 and 2001-02.....	110
Table 37.1: Number and rates per 100,000 for pertussis, for selected states and territories, 2000 and 2001.....	115
Table 38.1: Number and rates per 100,000 for meningococcal disease, for selected states and territories, 2000 and 2001.....	116
Table 39.1 Rates per 100,000 of sexually transmissible diseases for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aged 15-55 years, by sex, for selected states and territories, 2000 and 2001.....	118
Table 40.1: Hospitalisations for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000-01 to 2001-02.....	119
Table 40.2: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001-02.....	120
Table 41.1: Hospitalisations for circulatory disease for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000-01 to 2001-02	122
Table 41.2: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for circulatory disease for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001-02.....	123
Table 41.3: Hospitalisations for coronary heart disease for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000-01 to 2001-02	124

Table 41.4: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for coronary heart disease for persons aged 0–74 years, by Indigenous status and by sex, by state and territory, 2001–02.....	125
Table 41.5: Hospitalisations for rheumatic fever and heart disease for persons aged 0–74 years by Indigenous status and by sex, by state and territory, 2000–01 to 2001–02.....	126
Table 41.6: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for rheumatic fever and heart disease for persons aged 0–74 years, by Indigenous status, sex and state and territory, 2001–02	127
Table 42.1: Hospitalisations for injury and poisoning for persons aged 0–74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000–01 to 2001–02	129
Table 42.2: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for injury and poisoning for persons aged 0–74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001–02.	130
Table 42.3: Hospitalisations for road vehicle accidents for persons aged 0–74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000–01 to 2001–02	131
Table 42.4: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for road vehicle accidents for persons aged 0–74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001–02	132
Table 42.5: Hospitalisations for other accidents for persons aged 0–74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000–01 and 2001–02.....	133
Table 42.6: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for other accidents for persons aged 0–74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001–02.....	134
Table 42.7: Hospitalisations for self-harm for persons aged 0–74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000–01 to 2001–02	135
Table 42.8: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for self-harm for persons aged 0–74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001–02	136
Table 42.9: Hospitalisations for assault for persons aged 0–74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000–01 and 2001–02	137
Table 42.10: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for assault for persons aged 0–74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001–02.....	138
Table 43.1: Hospitalisations for respiratory diseases for persons aged 0–74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000–01 to 2001–02.....	140
Table 43.2: Age-standardised hospital separation rates and rate ratios for respiratory diseases for persons aged 0–74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001–02.....	141
Table 43.3: Hospitalisations for pneumonia for persons aged 0–74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000–01 to 2001–02.....	142

Table 43.4: Age-standardised hospital separation rates and rate ratios for pneumonia for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001-02	143
Table 43.5: Hospitalisations for lung cancer for persons aged 0-74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000-01 to 2001-02	144
Table 43.6: Age-standardised hospital separation rates and rate ratios for lung cancer for persons aged 0-74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001-02	145
Table 44.1: Hospitalisations for diabetes as the principal diagnosis for persons aged 0-74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000-01 to 2001-02.	147
Table 44.2: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for diabetes as the principal diagnosis for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001-02.....	148
Table 44.3: Hospitalisations for diabetes as an additional diagnosis for persons aged 0-74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000-01 to 2001-02	149
Table 44.4: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for diabetes as an additional diagnosis for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001-02.....	150
Table 44.5: Hospitalisations for diabetes as a principal or an additional diagnosis for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000-01 and 2001-02	151
Table 44.6: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for diabetes as a principal or an additional cause for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001-02.....	152
Table 45.1: Hospitalisations for tympanoplasty for otitis media for children aged 0-14 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000-01 to 2001-02	153
Table 45.2: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for tympanoplasty for otitis media, for children aged 0-14 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001-02	154
Table 46.1: Hospitalisations for depressive disorders for persons aged 0-74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000-01 and 2001-02.....	156
Table 46.2: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for depressive disorders for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001-02.....	157
Table 46.3: Hospitalisations for anxiety disorders for persons aged 0-74 years by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2000-01 to 2001-02	158
Table 46.4: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for anxiety disorders for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001-02.....	159
Table 46.5: Hospitalisations for substance use disorders for persons aged 0-74 years, by Indigenous status, sex and state and territory, 2000-01 to 2001-02.....	160

Table 46.6: Age-standardised hospitalisation rates and rate ratios for substance use disorders for persons aged 0–74 years, by Indigenous status and sex, by state and territory, 2001–02.....	161
Table 49.1: Experimental estimates of the probability of a person aged 20 years dying before age 55 years, for the Indigenous and total Australian populations, by sex, 1999–01	164
Table 50.2: Age- and sex- specific death rates per 1,000 and rate ratios for all causes, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	167
Table 51.1: Number of deaths among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	169
Table 51.2: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	170
Table 52.1: Number of deaths from circulatory disease among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	173
Table 52.2: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from circulatory diseases, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	174
Table 52.3: Number of deaths from coronary heart disease among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	175
Table 52.4: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from coronary heart disease, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	176
Table 52.5: Number of deaths from rheumatic heart disease among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and state and territory, 1999–01	177
Table 52.6: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from rheumatic heart disease, by Indigenous status and state and territory, 1999–01	177
Table 53.1: Number of deaths from injury and poisoning among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	179
Table 53.2: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from injury and poisoning, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	180
Table 53.3: Number of deaths from road vehicle accidents among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	181
Table 53.4: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from road vehicle accidents, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	182
Table 53.5: Number of deaths from other accidents among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999–01	183

Table 53.6: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from other accidents, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	184
Table 53.7: Number of deaths from self-harm among those aged 15-24 years, by Indigenous status, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	185
Table 53.8: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from self-harm, by Indigenous status, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	186
Table 53.9: Number of deaths from assault among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01.....	187
Table 53.10: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from assault, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01.....	188
Table 54.1: Number of deaths from respiratory disease among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	190
Table 54.2: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from respiratory diseases, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	191
Table 54.3: Number of deaths from pneumonia among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01.....	192
Table 54.4: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from pneumonia, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	193
Table 54.5: Number of deaths from lung cancer among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01.....	194
Table 54.6: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from lung cancer, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	195
Table 55.1: Number of deaths from diabetes as an underlying cause among those aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	197
Table 55.2: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from diabetes as an underlying cause, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	198
Table 55.3: The number of deaths from diabetes as a multiple cause for people aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	199
Table 55.4: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for diabetes as a multiple cause, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	200
Table 55.5: The number of deaths from diabetes as an underlying or a multiple cause for people aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01	201
Table 55.6: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for diabetes as an underlying or a multiple cause, by Indigenous status and sex, for selected states and territories, 1999-01.....	202

Table 56.1: Number of deaths from cervical cancer among females aged less than 75 years, by Indigenous status and state and territory, 1999-01	203
Table 56.2: Age-standardised mortality rates and rate ratios for death from cervical cancer, by Indigenous status and state and territory, 1999-01	204
Table A.1: Summary of quantitative indicators.....	205
Table A.2: Mapping of 2001 and 2002 performance indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health to indicators used in earlier reports.....	212

List of figures

Figure 6.1: Infant mortality rates by Indigenous status of the mother, selected states and territories, 1999-01 36

Figure 6.2: Infant mortality rates of Indigenous people in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, 2000 37

Figure 28.1: Proportion of low birthweight babies by mother’s Indigenous status and state and territory, 1998-00..... 100

Figure 48.1: Rates of stillbirths by mother’s Indigenous status, by state and territory, 1998-00 163

Figure 51.1: Mortality rates of Indigenous people in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada, 2000 171

Executive summary

This is the first national summary report on the refined set of 56 health performance indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The indicators are designed to provide an assessment of whether the health of Indigenous people is improving and to highlight problem areas that Australia's health system should address as high priorities.

This report, like many previous reports, draws attention to the relatively poor quality of the data on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This means that comprehensive comparisons between states and territories are not yet possible. In the report, the indicators are presented according to different domains of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework; this executive summary is intended to highlight particular areas that warrant further attention.

Areas of concern

Life expectancy at birth is significantly lower for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people than all Australians (Indicator 5). Also, the probability of a 20-year-old person dying before his or her 55th birthday is 3 to 5 times higher for Indigenous Australians than for all Australians (Indicator 49). The proportion of births to Indigenous mothers that are low birthweight – a risk factor for ill health and mortality – is twice the rate observed in the non-Indigenous population (Indicator 28).

Chronic diseases

The major causes of early adult deaths in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population are chronic diseases such as diabetes and circulatory diseases (including rheumatic heart disease) and respiratory system diseases. Death rates from diabetes were between 9 and 16 times higher than the rates in the non-Indigenous population (Indicator 55). Death rates from circulatory system diseases in the Indigenous population were 4 to 5 times higher than in the non-Indigenous population (Indicator 52). Death rates from respiratory diseases were between 5 and 8 times higher (Indicator 54).

A large proportion of Indigenous people participate in behaviours that place their health at risk in the short and long term. Approximately 48% of Indigenous adults are overweight or obese (Indicator 31), 53% are current smokers (Indicator 29), and 46% consumed alcohol. Of those who consumed alcohol, 28% consumed it at risky or high-risk levels (Indicator 30).

Injury and assaults

Across the states and territories, Indigenous people were hospitalised for injury at between 3 and 4 times the rates of non-Indigenous people, and died from injury at between 2 and 4 times the rates of non-Indigenous people (Indicators 42 and 53). Prominent among injuries leading to hospitalisation or death was assault – hospitalisations for Indigenous people were between 14 and 24 times the rate for non-Indigenous people, while death rates for Indigenous people were between 5 and 13 times the rate for non-Indigenous people (Indicators 42 and 53). For injury resulting from assault, just over half of Indigenous

hospitalisations were female, compared with only one-quarter of non-Indigenous hospitalisations.

Sexually transmitted diseases

Another area of concern is sexually transmissible diseases (Indicator 39). Rates of infection with chlamydia, gonococcus and syphilis in the Indigenous population are high. Sexually transmitted diseases are avoidable, and untreated sexually transmitted diseases can lead to serious complications and the continued spread of the diseases.

Mental health, self-harm and substance use

Mortality from self-harm is 3 to 4 times higher in the Indigenous population than in the non-Indigenous population, and morbidity is around 3 times higher (Indicators 53 and 42). The rate of hospitalisation for substance use disorders was between 6 and 10 times higher in the Indigenous population. Hospitalisation rates for depressive and anxiety disorders were between 1 and 4 times the rates in the non-Indigenous population (Indicator 46).

Health system capacity

A number of the indicators provide measures of the current capacity of the Australian health system to provide health promotion and primary health care for Indigenous Australians (Indicators 2, 4 and 20).

In relation to expenditure on health promotion programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there was considerable variation across states and territories. Expenditure in 2001–02 ranged from nil in Tasmania to \$4.8 million in the Northern Territory. In relation to overall expenditure on health care, the ratio of expenditure on Indigenous to non-Indigenous Australians under the Medical Benefits Scheme and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme was just 0.39 (Indicator 2). These programs are a principal route for the delivery of primary health care to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous expenditure for all programs funded and administered by the Australian Government was 0.82.

With regard to workforce capacity of Indigenous people, in 2001, only 0.3% of doctors and 0.5% of nurses were Indigenous (Indicator 20), although the numbers are increasing. Another way to improve access to services is to reduce the cultural barriers that confront Indigenous people seeking treatment in mainstream health services. A considerable amount of variation exists between states and territories in the cultural awareness training that is provided to professional staff (Indicator 24).

Data limitations

A common problem highlighted in the report is the poor quality of information, especially in the identification of Indigenous people, with Indigenous status being not recorded or wrongly recorded in many datasets. The identification of Indigenous people in birth and death registrations, primary health care service records (including general practitioners' records) and hospital records remains a significant data quality problem (Indicator 1). While progress is being made, continued effort is needed in states and territories to improve and maintain Indigenous identification in the different data collections.

Introduction

This is the first report against the refined set of health performance indicators endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) in 2000. This report for 2001 and 2002 covers activity in the 2001 and 2002 calendar years and the 2000–01 and 2001–02 financial years.

Background

In 1996 AHMAC directed state and federal health departments to develop a set of national performance indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. In 1997 the Australian Health Ministers' Conference endorsed an interim set of 58 national performance indicators to be reported against annually by all states and territories. Annual reports against these interim indicators were prepared for 1998, 1999 and 2000 (published in 2003).

A number of problems existed with the interim set of performance indicators:

- some indicator definitions were difficult to interpret;
- the data provided by states and territories was often of poor quality and for different time periods;
- data was not provided at all by some states and territories for a number of important indicators;
- no indicators addressed measures of social and emotional wellbeing;
- no conceptual framework accompanied the indicator set.

In 1998 AHMAC requested that the national performance indicators be refined. The Co-operative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health was engaged by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to conduct a technical refinement of the indicators. In October 2000 AHMAC endorsed the refined set of 56 indicators, which included a conceptual framework for the indicators, indicator definitions, potential data sources and reporting responsibilities.

This set of 56 national performance indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is a heterogeneous set which describes population health status, the incidence and prevalence of selected conditions, death rates, social and economic wellbeing, and factors pertaining to the organisation and delivery of health services. They include measures of health service delivery performance, broader government service accountability, state of health of the population, health outcomes and key health determinants including risk factors.

Rather than relying on states and territories to provide data for all indicators, the responsibility for reporting on the indicators is shared among the states and territories and a number of agencies. National data is used to report on the indicators whenever possible.

The conceptual framework

The refined set of 56 indicators is mapped within the conceptual framework that groups them according to three main domains: