

Australia's  
**YOUNG  
PEOPLE** 2003

Their health and wellbeing



# **Australia's young people: their health and wellbeing 2003**

**Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Canberra**

**AIHW Cat. No. PHE 50**

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ISBN 1 74024 182 7

**Suggested citation**

AIHW. Australia's young people: their health and wellbeing 2003. AIHW Cat. No. PHE 50. Canberra: AIHW.

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Published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Printed by Pirion Printing

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# Preface

In June 2001 there were 3.5 million young people aged 12–24 years in Australia, constituting approximately 18% of the total population. The proportion of young people in the population has been decreasing over the last few decades and in 2001 was the lowest ever observed. This decrease is largely the result of a decline in fertility that began in the 1970s.

The health, behaviour and attitudes of young people today are crucial to the health of the future Australia. While young people enjoy good health relative to other age groups, they are particularly vulnerable to a number of conditions. Motor vehicle accidents, suicide, mental health and behavioural problems, teenage pregnancy and substance misuse have become risks to many young people. In addition, the health and wellbeing of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remains poor, compared with other young people. It is therefore important that we continue to monitor and report on trends in youth health and wellbeing in order to achieve health gains for Australia's young people.

It is now accepted that social and environmental conditions are also important determinants of health and that behaviour and attitudes can impact on health status. In addition to examining health outcomes, this report also describes behaviours and attitudes that affect health status and examines the broader determinants of health and their impact on health status.

Australia's Young People: Their Health and Wellbeing 2003 is the second national report on the health and wellbeing of Australian young people. The report brings together information from a wide range of sources to reveal a national picture of health status and determinants of health of young people. The cooperation of many information providers is gratefully acknowledged.

The structure of Australia's Young People: Their Health and Wellbeing 2003 report closely follows that of the National Health Performance framework. At the centre of the framework is a set of indicators designed to facilitate concise, comprehensive and balanced judgement with regard to changes in health status and determinants of health. Production of this report was assisted by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Richard Madden  
Director



# Acknowledgments

Many people contributed to this report. Their time and commitment are greatly appreciated.

The following people from the AIHW and AIHW collaborating units refereed various sections of the report: Mark Cooper-Stanbury, Anne Broadbent, Gail Weaving, Susie Kelly, Ros Madden, Joanne Davies and Xinyang Wen (AIHW), James Harrison (AIHW National Injury Surveillance Unit), Helena Britt (AIHW General Practice Statistics and Classification Unit), Kaye Roberts-Thomson (AIHW Dental Research Unit) and Margaret Burgess and Peter McIntyre (National Center for Immunisation Research and Surveillance of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases).

Referees from other organisations were Darren Evans and the Health section at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), George Patton (Centre for Adolescent Health, University of Melbourne), Di Hetzel (Public Health Information Development Unit, University of Adelaide), Kate Freiberg (Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance, Griffith University), Yin Paradies (Menzies School of Health Research), Michael Booth (School of Paediatrics and Child Health, University of Sydney), Allan Carmichael (Faculty of Health Science, University of Tasmania), and Peter McDonald (Demography and Sociology Program, Australian National University).

Staff from the following units at AIHW provided special data for the report: Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes Monitoring Unit, Disability Services Unit, Health Monitoring and Development Unit, Health Registers and Cancer Monitoring Unit, Population Health Unit and Population Health Data and Information Services Unit. Staff at AIHW collaborating units – Knute Carter (AIHW Dental Statistics and Research Unit) and Ying Pan (AIHW General Practice Statistics and Classification Unit) – also provided data for the report. Data were also provided by the following organisations: the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria (Vicki White), Health Insurance Commission (Ross Saunders), University of Adelaide (Brian Graetz) and Australian Sports Commission (Ian Ford).

Staff from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing also provided valuable comments on different sections of the report. Special thanks go to Audrey Graviou and Eileen Baker for coordinating the responses from the department. Staff from the Department of Family and Community Services and Department of Education, Science and Training are also to be thanked for their comments on Part V of the report. Thanks are also due to Lauren Di Salvia (AIHW, Media and publishing unit) for doing the graphics for the report, and staff of the AIHW Hospitals and Mental Health Services Unit for advice on hospital data.

We also wish to thank Ching Choi, Helen Moyle, Jenny Hargreaves, Diane Gibson and Richard Madden, who read and provided valuable comments on the entire report.