

AUSTRALIA'S WELFARE 2005

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AUSTRALIA'S WELFARE 2005

The seventh biennial welfare report of the
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Canberra
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Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

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Director

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Australian Government

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

The Hon Tony Abbott MP
Minister for Health and Ageing
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

On behalf of the Board of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare I am pleased to present to you *Australia's Welfare 2005*, as required under Subsection 31 (1A) of the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*.

I commend this report to you as a significant contribution to national information on welfare services and assistance and to the development and evaluation of welfare policies and programs in Australia.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Collins'.

Hon. Peter Collins
Chairperson of the Board

14 November 2005

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Preface

As the Director of the AIHW, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2005 edition of *Australia's Welfare*. This is the seventh edition of this publication, and the last to be produced during my term as Director.

The publication has become increasingly comprehensive. It includes indicators of overall wellbeing and measures of resources (both human and financial) to provide a more general overview, and endeavours to describe the interactions between different welfare sectors. *Australia's Welfare 2005* provides the best available guide to how the Australian welfare system affects large groups of Australians.

Improving the understanding that Australians have about welfare services and housing assistance is an important focus for the Institute. Chapters in *Australia's Welfare 2005* provide a wealth of reference information and statistics on children, youth and families, older people, people with a disability, homelessness and housing.

Not all these services and assistance are provided through government agencies, non-government organisations or private providers. Family members and volunteers provide substantial support and assistance to other Australians. They form an intrinsic and invaluable part of the welfare 'sector'.

Australians are fortunate indeed to have the array of services available from so many committed, skilled people, both paid and unpaid. As well as their immediate value, these services allow many people to participate more fully in their families and the community and provide a strong measure of social cohesion for the community as a whole.

I am particularly pleased in the breadth of information available in this edition in the chapter on children, youth and families. Children and youth are the focus of several current inter-governmental undertakings and partnerships, and the chapter provides a valuable resource to those working in this critical area of social policy, whether as policy makers, policy analysts or service providers.

Many people have worked willingly and with considerable expertise to produce this edition. Their efforts have produced a reliable reference for all readers. My thanks go to them. I feel sure they would join me in wishing that *Australia's Welfare 2005* meets more than the Institute's legislative requirement. This seventh edition should make an important contribution to the current and ongoing debate about social policy in Australia.

Richard Madden
Director
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Symbols

N	number
m	million
b	billion
\$	Australian dollars, unless another country is specified
%	per cent
nec	not elsewhere classified
'000	thousands
n.p.	when used in a table – not published by the data source
n.a.	when used in a table – not available
nfd	not further defined
. .	when used in a table – not applicable
–	when used in a table – nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)
*	when used in front of a numerical value in a table – estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution
**	when used in front of a numerical value in a table – estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use