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Rural, regional and remote health

A guide to remoteness classifications

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The geographic guide (Tables 4-11) is based on concordances developed and provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ASGC Remoteness Areas) and the Department of Health and Ageing (ARIA). The original (1991) RRMA concordance, on which the 2001 concordance is based, was developed by the Department of Primary Industries and Energy and the then Department of Human Services and Health.

This document was developed and prepared by Brendan Brady and Andrew Phillips.

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
AUSLIG	Australian Surveying and Land Information Group
CD	Census Collection District
DHAC	Department of Health and Aged Care
DHSH	Department of Human Services and Health
DoHA	Department of Health and Ageing
DPIE	Department of Primary Industries and Energy
GIS	Geographic Information System
GISCA	National Key Centre for Social Applications of Geographic Information Systems
RRMA	Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas
SLA	Statistical Local Area

Symbols used in the tables and figures

..	not applicable
n.a.	not available
n.p.	not published in this report
n.e.d.	not elsewhere described

Explanatory notes

Geography

Capital City Statistical Division – represents the city in a broad sense. It should contain the anticipated development of the city for a period of at least 20 years (ABS 2003).

Census Collection District (CD) – an area that one census collector can cover for distribution and collection of census forms, in a ten-day period. In urban areas this translates to approximately 200 dwellings, and fewer than this in areas of lower population densities. The CD is the smallest spatial unit in the ASGC (ABS 2002). In census years CDs aggregate up to Statistical Local Areas (SLAs).

Populated Localities – based on AUSLIG ‘Populated Centres’ (DHAC & GISCA 2001). ‘These are mapped places, across Australia, from where people might need to travel to obtain services’ (ABS 2001a).

Service Centres – are ABS-defined urban centres. An urban centre is a population cluster of 1,000 or more people. Urban centre boundaries are based on CDs (ABS 2002).

Statistical Subdivision – a general purpose spatial unit. It can be made up of one or more SLAs (ABS 2002).

Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) – based on the administrative areas of local government where these exist. Where there is no incorporated body of local government, SLAs are defined to cover the unincorporated areas. The SLA ‘is the base spatial unit used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to collect and disseminate statistics other than those collected in Population Censuses’ (ABS 2002).

Terminology

Several terms have been used in this publication when describing the three classifications and their underlying methodologies. Some of these terms are explained further in ‘The remoteness classifications’ (see page 2). The following is a guide to how each term has been used in this publication.

Concordance – a tool that shows the correspondence between geographic areas (such as SLAs and postcodes) and the classes assigned under a given classification scheme.

Terms relating to the RRMA classification:

RRMA classification – refers to the categoric classification. This classification consists of three broad zones (metropolitan, rural and remote) and seven finer classes (see Table 1 on page 5).

RRMA methodology – refers to the procedures used to allocate SLAs into RRMA zones and classes.

Terms relating to the ARIA classification:

ARIA classification – refers to the categoric classification. This classification consists of five ARIA classes (Highly Accessible, Accessible, Moderately Accessible, Remote and Very Remote) (see Table 2 on page 9). Each ARIA class is defined by a range of ARIA index values.

ARIA index value – refers to a continuous variable (with values ranging from 0 to 12) assigned to populated localities.

ARIA methodology – refers to the procedures that determine the ARIA index values of populated localities.

Terms relating to ASGC Remoteness Areas:

ASGC Remoteness Areas is based on ARIA+ methodology. ARIA+ methodology and ARIA methodology (the underlying methodology of the ARIA classification) are similar but have some differences.

ASGC Remoteness Areas – refers to the categoric classification. This classification consists of six ASGC Remoteness Area classes (Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, Very Remote and Migratory) (see Table 3 on page 11). Each ASGC Remoteness Area class (excluding Migratory) consists of a range of ARIA+ index values.

ARIA+ index value – refers to a continuous variable (with values ranging from 0 to 15) assigned to populated localities.

ARIA+/ARIA+ methodology – refers to the procedures that determine the ARIA+ index values of populated localities.

Foreword

The development over the last decade of geographical classifications for Australia that describe areas in terms of relative remoteness has provided an opportunity to compare a wide range of health and welfare indicators across Australia's major cities, regional and remote areas. This publication reviews the methodology behind the three major classifications that describe areas in this way – the RRMA (Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas) classification, the ARIA (Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia) classification and the ASGC (Australian Standard Geographical Classification) Remoteness Areas classification. This publication also summarises each classification's strengths and weaknesses and describes how the classifications are applied to administrative and survey data.

This publication also contains a tabular geographical guide (Tables 4-11) showing the class to which each Statistical Local Area (SLA) is assigned under each of the three classifications. Appendix A illustrates the application of the geographic classifications to ten selected SLAs.