

# Introduction

This framework updates the Rural Health Information Framework – Version 1 (AIHW 2003).

In 2003, the first version of the Rural Health Information Framework was published by AIHW. That work was commissioned by the then Office of Rural Health (ORH) in the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA), as a framework describing rural health information and a set of indicators against which to report on rural health.

To guide the process, the Rural Health Information Advisory Committee (RHIAC) was established. It comprised representatives from a range of organisations (including ORH) with an interest and expertise in rural health issues and information. RHIAC provided advice on:

- the development of the framework;
- the selection of possible indicators to provide representation across a range of dimensions within the framework; and
- the documentation for each indicator (though this also involved consultation with subject area).

The resulting framework was modelled on the National Health Performance Framework (NHPC 2001) and its purpose was to:

- develop a formal understanding of the types of information that are important for understanding rural health;
- review the usefulness of available data collections towards this understanding, so laying the foundations for an ability to report in a systematic way on rural health issues; and
- assist in identifying gaps in the data that prevent effective reporting of rural health issues.

Following the release of the original framework report, work commenced on populating the indicators to provide a systematic and comprehensive description of health in regional and remote Australia. While collecting and analysing the data for *Rural, Regional and Remote Health: Indicators of Health* (AIHW 2005), a number of challenges and data issues were identified.

Accordingly, this report updates Version 1 of the framework, capitalising on the experience gained while reporting against the indicators. The structure of the framework has not been altered and new indicators have not been added, but issues such as data availability and statistical methods have been updated, and practical advice is offered for those who contemplate reporting against the indicators (see page 182).