

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Corporate overview

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is an independent Commonwealth statutory authority established and operating under the provisions of the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*. The Institute is in the Health and Family Services portfolio.

Responsible Minister

From 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998 the Minister responsible for the Institute was the Hon. Dr Michael Wooldridge, Minister for Health and Family Services.

The Institute also communicated directly with the Minister for Family Services, the Hon. Judi Moylan (until October 1997), then the Hon. Warwick Smith (from October 1997), on matters for which they were directly responsible.

Functions

The AIHW's primary functions relate to the collection and production of health-related and welfare-related information and statistics, and are specified in section 5 of the AIHW Act.

In summary the AIHW:

- identifies and meets the information needs of governments and the community to enable them to make informed decisions on improving the health and welfare of Australians;
- provides authoritative and timely information and analysis to the Commonwealth Government, State and Territory governments, and non-government clients through the collection, analysis and dissemination of national health and community services data; and
- develops, maintains and promotes, in conjunction with stakeholders, information standards for health and community services to enable comparison of national, State and Territory data.

The Institute has power to do what is necessary or convenient for the best performance of its functions. In particular it may:

- enter into contracts or arrangements, including contracts or arrangements with bodies or persons to perform functions on behalf of the Institute (details of such collaborations are included later in this Report); and
- subject to very strict confidentiality provisions contained in the AIHW Act, release data to other bodies or persons.

The Institute publishes the results of its work.

Legislation

The Institute was established as a statutory authority in 1987 by the then *Australian Institute of Health Act 1987*. In

1992 the Institute's role and functions were expanded to include welfare-related information and statistics. The Act is now the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987* (Appendix 2, page 79).

Corporate governance

AIHW Board

Section 8(1) of the AIHW Act specifies the composition of the Board of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Board members, other than the three ex-officio members and the staff representative, are appointed by the Governor-General on the recommendation of the Minister for Health and Family Services for periods not exceeding 3 years. Details of 1997–98 Board members are listed below. The term of the Board ended on 30 June 1998. The Financial Statements contain details of remuneration of Board members (Note 12, page 75), and Related Party Disclosures of the Board (Note 13, page 76).

Matters resolved by the Board during the year included:

- Commissioning a review into AIHW policies on privacy issues and data security (see page 9 for more details), and endorsement of its recommendations
- Establishment of the General Practice Statistics and Classification Unit and endorsement of its Survey of General Practice Activity (see details on pages 9 and 30)
- Arrangements for establishment of desktop email consistent with AIHW security policy
- Endorsement of AIHW business principles and charging policy.

Board members (to 30 June 1998)

Chairperson

Professor Janice Reid

Director, AIHW

Dr Richard Madden

Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council nominee

Dr David Filby

Standing Committee of Community Services and Income Security Administrators nominee

Mr Richard Deyell

Representative of State and Territory Housing Departments representative

Ms Vivienne R Milligan

Australian Statistician

Represented by Mr Tim Skinner, Deputy Australian Statistician

Secretary, Department of Health and Family Services

Mr Andrew Podger

Person with knowledge of the needs of consumers of health services

Ms Mary Draper

Person with knowledge of the needs of consumers of welfare services

Ms Sarah Fogg

Person with knowledge of the needs of consumers of housing assistance services

Mr Harold Bissett

Person with expertise in research into public health issues

Professor D'Arcy Holman

Ministerial nominee

Dr Anna Howe

Ministerial nominee

Mr Brian Kennedy

Ministerial nominee

Ms Judith Dwyer

AIHW staff nominee

Dr Janis Shaw

As public housing responsibilities currently rest with the Minister for Social Security, the Secretary of the Department of Social Security is invited to attend Board meetings. His representative until May 1998 was Dr Jeff Harmer. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Institute have reciprocal arrangements to observe Institute Board and NHMRC Council meetings respectively.

Board Committees

Health and Welfare Ethics Committees

The functions and the composition of the Institute's Health Ethics Committee are prescribed in section 16(1) of the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*, and Regulations accompanying the Act. The Committee's principal responsibilities are to form an opinion as to the acceptability or otherwise, on ethical grounds, of current or proposed health-related activities of the Institute or bodies with which the Institute is associated, and to inform the Institute of the Committee's opinion. The Institute can release identifiable health data for research purposes with the agreement of the Committee, provided that release does not contravene the terms and conditions under which the data were supplied to the Institute.

During the year, the Institute established a Welfare Ethics Committee to cover the Institute's welfare activities. The Institute, under its Act, cannot release identifiable welfare information. The membership of this Committee is identical to that of the Health Ethics Committee.

Membership and meetings

The Regulations accompanying the Act provide for members to be appointed by the Institute for such periods as is specified in their instrument of appointment. During the year, two members were re-appointed to the Committees. They were Dr Sid Sax, Chairman, and Dr Helen Christensen. Membership of the Health and Welfare Ethics Committees at 30 June 1998 is shown below.

Four meetings of the Health Ethics Committee, and two of the Ethics Welfare Committee were held during 1997–98. The Committees agreed to the ethical acceptability of 25 projects during the year, and referred two projects back to the Institute for clarification or resolution prior to approval. During the year the Committee rejected one project.

The Ethics Committee made a submission to the Board with suggestions for the enhanced dissemination of the results of research conducted by researchers outside the Institute using Institute data. At its June 1998 Board meeting the Board endorsed the recommendations in the submission.

Health Ethics Committee and Welfare Ethics Committee members

Medical graduate with research experience

Dr Sid Sax (Chairman)

Graduate in a social science

Dr Helen Christensen

Nominee of the Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Mr John Jameson

Minister of Religion

Rev Dr D'Arcy Wood

A legal practitioner

Mr Robert Todd

Representatives of general community attitudes

Mr Ken Moran

Ms Sophie Hill

Director, AIHW

Dr Richard Madden

Audit and Finance Committee

The AIHW Audit and Finance Committee met twice during the year and was responsible for:

- approval of strategic and annual audit plans;
- consideration of major audit reports involving issues of concern to senior management;
- review of annual financial statements and audit report; and

- monitoring action on Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) reports.

House Committee

The House Committee provided advice to the Board and the Institute on management issues and met (by teleconference) as the need arose.

Funding

Part of the Institute's funding is appropriated through the Federal Budget as part of the Health and Family Services portfolio. The 1997-98 appropriation was \$7,748,000 (see Appendix 1, page 59). Income earned from external contracts for 1997-98 was \$6,556,000. Further details on contract work are set out in Appendix 4 (page 110).

For Commonwealth Government program budgeting purposes, for the period 1997-98 the Institute was a sub-program of Program 1 (Public Health) of the Health and Family Services portfolio.

Structure, management and staff

Organisational structure

The Institute Director, who is a member of the Board, is responsible for the Institute's activities. The Director is supported in this role by three Division Heads, each with a major functional responsibility within the Institute's Canberra headquarters. A chart showing the AIHW organisational structure is at page 7.

Divisions

The Institute has three major divisions: Health, Welfare, and Information Management and Business Services. The Director is supported by a National Information Policy and Coordination Unit.

Collaborating Units

Five Collaborating Units (contracted with the organisations shown below) assist the Institute in performing its functions:

- National Perinatal Statistics Unit (University of NSW)
- Dental Statistics and Research Unit (University of Adelaide)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Information Unit (National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics, Australian Bureau of Statistics)
- National Injury Surveillance Unit (Flinders University)
- General Practice Statistics and Classification Unit (University of Sydney). This Unit was established early in 1998.

The AIHW also has a collaborative relationship with the National Centre for Classification in Health (NCCH) and contributes to the funding of NCCH's Brisbane office in

conjunction with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services.

Institute staff

AIHW staff are employed under the Public Service Act. Details of AIHW staffing during 1997-98 are shown on page 54. Details of the AIHW Executive, their qualifications and areas of responsibility as at 30 June 1998 are listed below. Similar information for the Institute's Unit Heads is included at Appendix 8 (page 117).

AIHW senior staff

Executive

Director

Richard Madden, BSc Syd, PhD Princeton, FIA, FIAA

Health Division

Division Head

Geoff Sims, BCom (Stats) (Hons) UNSW

Welfare Division

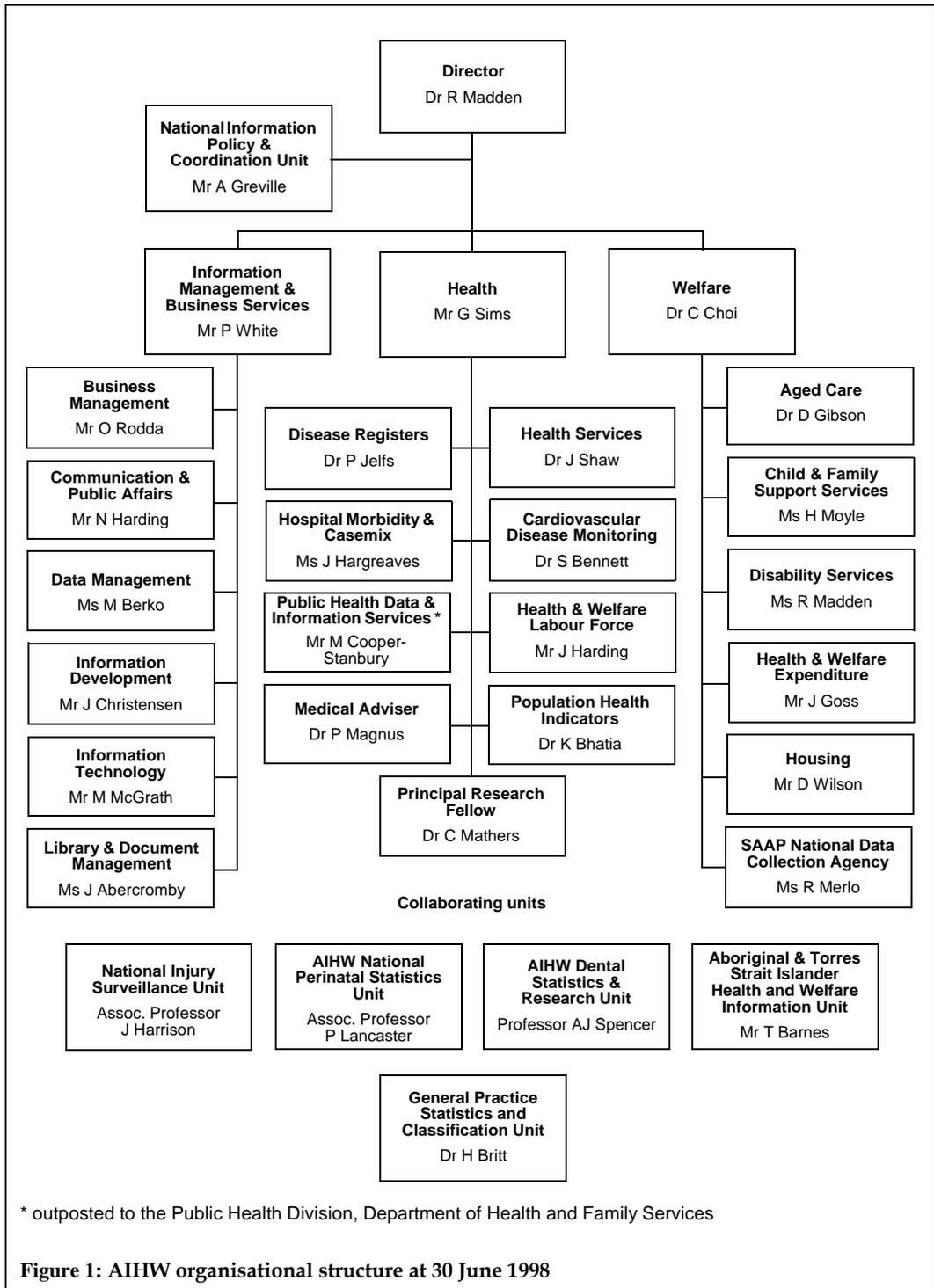
Division Head

Ching Y Choi, BA ICU, PhD ANU

Information Management and Business Services Division

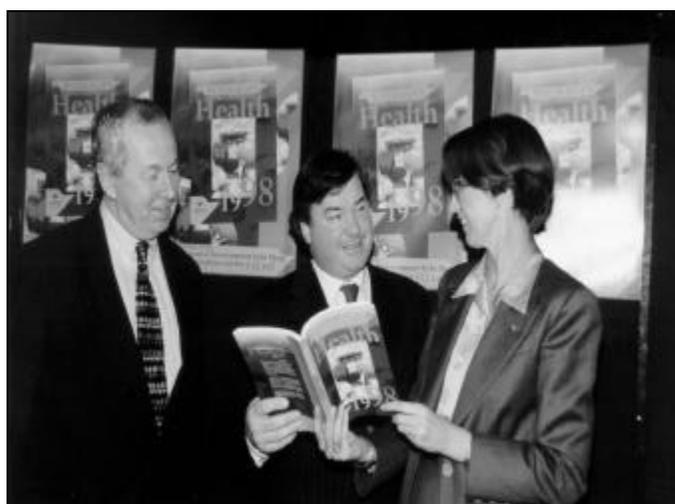
Division Head

Peter White, AM, GradDipAdmin KCAE, MEd Canberra





AIHW Director Dr Richard Madden at the launch of Australia's Welfare 1997 by the Minister for Family Services, Warwick Smith



Minister for Health and Family Services Dr Michael Wooldridge (centre) confers with AIHW Board Chairperson Prof. Janice Reid and AIHW Director Dr Richard Madden at the launch of Australia's Health 1998

Highlights

Australia's Welfare 1997 and Australia's Health 1998

The AIHW has a legislative requirement to produce comprehensive biennial reports on the nation's health, and the nation's welfare. Each publication requires significant effort from staff across the organisation. Both major reports were published during 1997-98.

A major innovation this year was the holding of one-day conferences to coincide with the launching of both *Australia's Welfare 1997* and *Australia's Health 1998*.

Australia's Welfare 1997 was launched by the Minister for Family Services, the Hon. Warwick Smith, on 20 November 1997 at Parliament House, Canberra. Three prominent academics gave keynote speeches at the conference, and the report's authors presented the main features of their chapters. *Australia's Welfare 1997* includes a special chapter on families and welfare services by Professor Peter McDonald of the Australian National University.

Australia's Health 1998 was launched by the Minister for Health and Family Services, the Hon. Dr Michael Wooldridge, on 25 June 1998 at the National Convention Centre, Canberra. This conference followed a similar format, with guest keynote addresses on health issues, and presentations by 12 authors. As part of its coverage of health issues *Australia's Health 1998* reports specifically on Australia's five national health priority areas: cancer control, cardiovascular health, injury prevention and control, mental health and diabetes.

Both conferences were judged highly successful by participants and were self-funding through the charging of a modest registration fee. *Australia's Welfare 1997*, *Australia's Health 1998* and all other major AIHW publications are available free of charge on the Internet via the Institute's web site (<http://www.aihw.gov.au>).

Survey of General Practice Activity

The University of Sydney and the Institute agreed to establish the General Practice Statistics and Classification Unit during 1997-98 within the University's Family Medicine Research Unit. The new collaboration was established to undertake a continuing survey of general practice activity, which commenced in April 1998. The survey, and its innovative funding arrangements, are described in detail later in this report.

Information privacy and security

The Board commissioned a review, chaired by Professor D'Arcy Holman, into AIHW policies on privacy issues and data security. The review made a range of recommendations, the most significant covering AIHW obligations in handling data collected without the specific

consent of information subjects (the bulk of AIHW data). The Board endorsed the review's recommendations.

In October 1997 the Australian Federal Police sought access to identified records held by the Institute by use of a warrant. Senior Institute staff responded that no such access was permitted under the AIHW Act. Following lengthy discussions and legal advice, the Australian Federal Police withdrew its demands. The assistance of the Legal Branch of the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) and the Australian Government Solicitor during this difficult episode was much appreciated.

National Community Services Data Dictionary

Version 1.0 of the *National Community Services Data Dictionary*, developed and compiled by the National Community Services Data Committee with the assistance of AIHW, was released in June 1998. The compilation of this, the first national data dictionary for community services, was requested by the National Community Services Information Management Group, and was jointly funded by AIHW and the Standing Committee of Community Services and Income Security Administrators (SCCSISA). The Data Dictionary contains a data model that provides an organising framework for the data dictionary entries.

National Information Agreements

All parties to the National Health Information Management Group agreed in February 1998 to extend the National Health Information Agreement to 2003.

The National Community Services Information Agreement has now been signed by all States and Territories except Western Australia. The National Community Services Information Management Group has circulated to interested parties for comment a draft National Community Services Information Development Plan that sets out priority areas for information development in community services.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information Plan

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information Plan...This Time, Let's Make it Happen was completed after several extensive rounds of consultation and feedback throughout Australia involving seminars and workshops in all States and Territories with governments and the community-controlled health sector. The Plan, developed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Information Unit (ATSIHWIU), was endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) and Health Ministers, and has since been widely published and distributed. The National Health Information Management Group has established a special working group to oversee implementation of the Plan. AIHW has lead responsibility for improving identification

of Indigenous people in hospital, perinatal and cancer statistics.

AIHW's contract work The Memorandum of Understanding signed with DHFS on 1 July 1997 has seen a continuing increase in work from all areas of the Department. Much of this is national work contracted by the Commonwealth on behalf of all jurisdictions. There has also been an important rationalisation of effort in hospital statistics and aged care information, with Institute publications becoming the major dissemination vehicles in the two areas.

The Institute continues to be careful to take on only work that fits within its mission, with a key stipulation being that the Institute's findings and methods are accessible to all.

Finance The Institute charges for externally funded work on a basis to recover costs incurred in full. The financial result for 1997-98 was a deficit of \$1.5 million. Around \$1 million of this was covered by the changeover of the Institute's computing system to a PC environment, and so will be non-recurring. The continuing absence of funding capacity for staff long service liabilities as they accrue (rather than as they emerge) and for asset replacement, means that deficits of the order of \$250,000 per annum will continue. The introduction of accrual budgeting in 1999-2000 should provide an opportunity for these funding anomalies to be addressed. In the meantime, a note to the financial statements indicates the need for continuing appropriations to allow the Institute to meet its commitments.

Timeliness Further progress was made in releasing major AIHW collections quickly to ensure that relevant data are available for policy-making and community discussion. Importantly, *Australian Hospital Statistics 1996-97* was published before the end of 1997-98, and a lag of around 12 months has now been achieved on most of the important data collections. Cancer data is one major collection where delays in data delivery from some jurisdictions prevent timely publication, but improvements have been achieved here too.

The Institute appreciates the strong support of States and Territories in supplying data, and the efforts being made to overcome bottlenecks, as well as the huge effort by staff across AIHW.

Dissemination The Institute's web site, launched in 1996, has been a key means of disseminating AIHW publications and information. Publications are now routinely made available free of charge on the web site. During the year the

Institute's web site was accessed approximately 30,000 times by external users.

Publications themselves continue to be of high quality, and web site access to detailed tables has allowed some slimming down in size of publications. All publications are now available through e-mail ordering, by telephone, mail or fax, or from Government Info Shops. A selection of major AIHW publications is available from ABS Bookshops.

Significantly, national health information data definitions (metadata) are now available electronically through the National Health Information Knowledgebase, accessed through the AIHW web site.

Finally, direct enquiries are handled across all areas of the Institute. These are welcome, and short enquiries are handled without charge.

National information and policy coordination

The National Information and Policy Coordination Unit coordinates the development of national health and community services information for the AIHW. The Unit supports the AIHW Board, Executive and Health and Welfare Ethics Committees. It also provides the secretariat function for the National Health Information Agreement and the National Community Services Information Agreement. Moving towards a coordinated approach, consistency and compatibility between health information and welfare information is a high priority.

The Unit Head is Secretary to the Institute's Executive Committee, and the Unit supports the Director's activities in various health and welfare forums, and in his business development role.

The Unit has provided the secretariat for the recent reviews of the Institute's Collaborating Units. This round of reviews was completed in 1997 with the finalisation of the review of the Dental Statistics and Research Unit. In 1997-98 the Unit agreed to support the special working group of NHIMG to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information Plan.

Staff of the Unit decreased by 1, to 5, during 1997-98.