

Recent developments in the collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and welfare statistics 2005

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Bureau of Statistics
Canberra

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Contents

List of tables	v
Abbreviations	vi
Preface	viii
Introduction	1
1 Recent national strategic information initiatives and future plans	4
National Health Information Agreement	4
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information Plan	4
National Housing Data Agreement.....	5
Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information	6
National Community Services Information Agreement	6
2 Recent and forthcoming statistical reports	8
<i>The health and welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>National Health Survey: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander results</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Population characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Population distribution, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Experimental estimates and projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Expenditures on health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>National summary of the jurisdictional reports against the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health performance indicators</i>	<i>10</i>
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework (HPF).....	10
<i>Data quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification: seven community services data collections</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: key indicators</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Report on government services: Indigenous compendium</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Australia's health.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Improving the quality of Indigenous identification in hospital separations data</i>	<i>13</i>
Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.....	13
Drug use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: an assessment of data sources	13
Indigenous disability data inventory	14
Indigenous housing indicators.....	14

<i>Indigenous housing needs – a multi-measure needs model</i>	14
<i>Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement national data reports: State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH)</i>	14
<i>Housing and infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Australia</i>	15
<i>Labour force characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, experimental estimates from the Labour Force Survey</i>	15
3 Identification and population estimation	16
Identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	16
Estimating the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	18
Torres Strait Islander population estimates.....	19
Estimating the homeless.....	19
4 Quality and availability of data	20
Census of Population and Housing.....	20
Indigenous survey program and other surveys	21
National Health surveys.....	22
Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH) survey.....	22
National Drug Strategy Household Survey.....	22
Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey.....	23
Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey.....	24
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.....	24
Administrative data.....	26
Vital statistics data.....	26
Health-related data.....	30
Education data.....	35
Housing data.....	36
Community services data.....	37
Law and justice data.....	42
Appendix 1: Discrete Indigenous communities, by remoteness structure	44
Appendix 2: Estimates and projections of the Indigenous population, 1991 to 2009.....	45
Appendix 3: Experimental Indigenous estimated resident population, 30 June 2001	46
References	47

List of tables

Table 4.1: National Census and survey collections relevant to Indigenous health and welfare, 1994–2006	25
Table 4.2: Indigenous births, coverage, 1998–2003	27
Table 4.3: Indigenous births, 2002	28
Table 4.4: Indigenous deaths, estimated coverage, 1999–2003.....	30

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCMIS	Aged and Community Care Management Information System
AHMAC	Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AJJA	Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators
AODTS-NMDS	Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set
AVETMISS	Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
BEACH	Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health
CACPs	Community Aged Care Packages
CHESSN	Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number
CHINS	Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CSHA	Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement
CSMAC	Community Services Ministers Advisory Council
CSTDA NMDS	Commonwealth-State/Territory Disability Agreement National Minimum Data Set
DoHA	Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing
DTC	Day Therapy Centre
EACH	Extended Aged Care at Home
GP	General practitioner
HACC MDS	Home and Community Care Minimum Data Set
HEIMS	Higher Education Information Management System
HPF	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework
ICH	Indigenous Community Housing
IES	Indigenous Enumeration Strategy
IHO	Indigenous Housing Organisation
JJ NMDS	Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MDS	Minimum Data Set
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
NAGATSIHID	National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data
NATSIHS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey
NATSIS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey

NCMHCD	National Community Mental Health Care Database
NCSDD	National Community Services Data Dictionary
NCSIA	National Community Services Information Agreement
NCSIMG	National Community Services Information Management Group
NDSS	National Diabetes Services Scheme
NHDA	National Housing Data Agreement
NHDAMG	National Housing Data Agreement Management Group
NHDD	National Health Data Dictionary
NHIG	National Health Information Group
NHIMG	National Health Information Management Group
NHS	National Health Survey
NIHIIC	National Indigenous Housing Information Implementation Committee
NMDS	National Minimum Data Set
NNDSS	National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System
NRF	National Reporting Framework
OATSIH	Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
OIPC	Office for Indigenous Policy Coordination
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SAR	Service Activity Reporting
SCATSIH	Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
SCIH	Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing
SCRCSPP	Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
SOMIH	State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing

Preface

This paper is an addendum to *The health and welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 2005* (ABS cat. no. 4704.0; AIHW cat. no. IHW 14).

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Bureau of Statistics have prepared this report jointly. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance and cooperation received from individuals and organisations that have provided us with the statistics and information which form the basis of this publication. We also thank Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples without whose cooperation and assistance in the collection of data this report would not have been possible.

Introduction

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia was estimated at 458,500 in June 2001, growing to 492,700 in June 2005, according to the 'low series projection' (ABS 2004d). The population has a younger age profile than the remainder of the Australian population – with a median age of 21 years compared with 36 years – and has higher fertility and mortality rates.

Good quality data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are needed to assess the effectiveness of programs and interventions, and to evaluate policies that are designed to improve the status of, and service delivery to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Evidence-based approaches to inform policy and program development continue to be of paramount importance. This has resulted in growing demand for high-quality, regularly reported information about Indigenous people, at a range of geographic levels.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are diverse in languages and cultures. They live in large cities, in small country towns, in remote areas of Australia, in the tropics, in desert areas, and on many isolated islands. This diversity in culture, conceptualisation of health and wellbeing, family structure, living arrangements and the relatively high proportion living in remote areas create practical and statistical challenges for the collection of data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Several of these issues are discussed in the relevant sections of this publication.

This paper consists of four parts. The first part discusses recent developments in national strategic information initiatives and future plans in the health, housing and community services areas. The second part describes recent and forthcoming statistical reports on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The third part provides information on Indigenous identification and population estimation. The fourth part provides information on the quality and availability of data collected on Indigenous people from the Censuses, surveys and administrative records.

There has been significant progress in the availability and quality of statistical information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over the last decade in Australia. This is related to a number of factors.

A coordinated approach to information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The governance structures for information on Indigenous Australians are an important and integral part of the national information processes. For example, in the health area, the National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data (NAGATSIHID), chaired by a member of the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC), has overseen the improvement of information through the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information Plan. NAGATSIHID has a majority of Indigenous members. Members bring different expertise from the areas of research and academia, service provision and policy. Information issues important to Indigenous people are expressed and debated at these meetings.

The data development efforts and activities overseen by NAGATSIHID are linked to a policy framework – the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework (HPF) was developed to provide the basis for quantitative measurement of the impact of policy on health outcomes of Indigenous people and uses the National Health Performance Committee's

framework for mapping the indicators. The HPF was developed by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (SCATSIH) – a subcommittee of AHMAC which reports to the Australian Health Ministers’ Conference.

In the housing area, another model of Indigenous information management has been implemented. In this model the National Indigenous Housing Information Implementation Committee (NIHIIC), which consists of representatives from state and territory governments, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Australian Government Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), is responsible for Indigenous housing information management.

In the community services area, Indigenous information is managed through the National Community Services Information Management Group, a group that has similar representation to NIHIIC but covers both mainstream and Indigenous-specific issues. The Community Services Ministers’ Advisory Council (CSMAC), however, now has a subgroup – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services Working Group – to deal with Indigenous-specific policy issues in the community services area.

Over the last two years, the Office for Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC), now within FaCSIA, was created to coordinate a whole-of-government approach to service delivery to Indigenous people. The OIPC is responsible for 30 Indigenous Coordination Centres. These serve as the point of coordination for the delivery of services across government portfolios for Indigenous communities and families in these areas. Service delivery to Indigenous Australians is based on the Council of Australian Government’s National Framework of Principles for Delivering Services to Indigenous Australians, which includes building partnerships with Indigenous communities based on shared responsibilities and mutual obligations.

Regular monitoring and reporting on health and welfare issues

There are a number of regular reports on statistics relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The most comprehensive of these is *The health and welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* (ABS & AIHW 2005). This report is published every two years by the AIHW and the ABS. The first report was released in 1997. These reports cover a wide range of topics of interest to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, policy makers and other stakeholders, including demographic profile, education, income and employment, housing, health status, and provision of and access to health and welfare services. The most recent report was launched in August 2005. Other reports include *Expenditures on health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* (AIHW cat. no. HWE 30); *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, 2004–05* (ABS cat. no. 4715.0); *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2002* (ABS cat. no. 4714.0) and *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage, key indicators, 2005* (SCRGSP). These reports can be downloaded free from the relevant AIHW, ABS or Productivity Commission web sites (www.aihw.gov.au; www.abs.gov.au; www.pc.gov.au/gsp).

Improved data quality and availability

A considerable effort has been devoted to enumerating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples more accurately in successive Censuses and in a way that involves the Indigenous population in the process. In addition, dedicated specific surveys of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are currently conducted by the ABS every three years, covering social and health issues. A number of information gaps in the social, cultural, economic, housing and health circumstances of Indigenous people have been addressed through these surveys. For

example, the latest social survey, conducted in 2002, included questions on disability among Indigenous people; and the latest health survey conducted in 2004–05 included a module to provide an assessment of social and emotional wellbeing.

Both the AIHW and the ABS, with advice from NAGATSIHID, have initiated and continue to drive programs in partnership with the Australian Government and state and territory governments to ensure that all administrative data sets are based on a consistent question on Indigenous status, and to document and improve the quality of Indigenous identification in vital statistics and other administrative data collections. Currently, however, different data collections have varying degrees of completeness of Indigenous identification.

Despite these achievements, many analytical and conceptual challenges remain. The varying level of identification between different data collections, within each data collection over time, and between regions, makes it difficult to assess changes over time and between different regions. The mismatch between how people identify or are identified in Censuses and some administrative datasets (e.g. death records) poses specific analytical problems. In addition, collecting information that is conceptually and culturally relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can be challenging to mainstream statistics.

The ABS and the AIHW are committed to working through these issues, to ensure a consistent, reliable picture of the health and welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is available. Both agencies are keen to work with other analysts to add to this picture and to prevent misleading material obscuring it.