1 Introduction

The National Chronic Disease Strategy calls for support for the appropriate use of medicines to maximise health outcomes and quality of life. This report aims to inform policy on chronic disease prevention and care regarding cardiovascular disease in Australians. Specifically, it attempts to shed some light on the question '*Are medicines to prevent and treat cardiovascular disease used appropriately?*' by presenting information from a range of data sources to cover various aspects of using medicines well.

The Background chapter of the report introduces the concept of 'quality use of medicines' and describes the challenges involved in using medicines appropriately. It also provides a snapshot of how many Australians are at risk of or affected by cardiovascular disease and summarises the types of medicines available for cardiovascular disease and their indications. Examples of known gaps between clinical practice and best practice in the use of medicines to prevent and treat cardiovascular disease are included.

Chapter 3 discusses patterns and trends of community supply and general practice prescription of cardiovascular medicines for any health problem.

Chapter 4 presents self-reported information on how many Australians use medicines to manage their cardiovascular conditions and the types of medicines they use.

Chapter 5 shows trends in the prescription of cardiovascular medicines by general practitioners to manage specific cardiovascular problems and risk factors. There is information on rates of supply of those medicines to patients by region of residence and socioeconomic level. Data on whether patients take selected cardiovascular medicines as intended are also included. This chapter also describes national initiatives to improve the quality of use of these medicines. Finally it presents information on adverse events associated with cardiovascular medicines, including deaths and hospitalisations, as well as initiatives to reduce them.

A detailed breakdown of government expenditure on these medicines, including trends, is given in Chapter 6.

The Discussion summarises the main findings of the report, draws conclusions from the data available and identifies gaps and limitations of the existing data.

The classification of medicines, data sources and analytical methods used in this report are presented in the Appendix. A brief description of the national bodies with responsibility for quality use of medicines is also included.

Clinical and technical terms are explained in the Glossary.