



9.0 Introduction

Indicators are commonly used to assess the performance of policies, programs or services, and to meet accountability and transparency requirements. Ideally, they provide information on change in outcomes, and inform quality improvements of services and programs.

Indicators are useful in highlighting particular results in an area of interest and in helping people to ask questions about why the result is as it is.

Indicators are simple statistics, such as numbers or rates, that summarise issues that are often complex; therefore, they should not be used in isolation. Contextual information should always be used to interpret and use indicator results.

The AIHW has been reporting on indicators of *Australia's welfare* as part of its biennial welfare flagship reports since 2003. Following a review, the 2015 edition of *Australia's welfare* included a new conceptual framework and a framework for these indicators (see Chapter 8 of *Australia's welfare 2015* for a discussion of the developmental work).

The indicator framework is designed to measure and report on the key components of the conceptual framework guiding the *Australia's welfare 2017* report (see Chapter 1.3 'Understanding welfare' Figure 1.3.1). In doing so, it aims not only to summarise the performance and outcomes of Australia's welfare services but also to provide insight into what determines the demand for them. It also includes several measures relating to the overall wellbeing of the Australian population. The wellbeing domain indicators are reported for the first time in 2017, and their development is discussed in Chapter 9.1 'The *Australia's welfare* indicator framework'. Chapter 9.2 'Indicators of *Australia's welfare*' presents data for 53 indicators across all five domains of the framework, including first results for 14 new wellbeing indicators.

