

Strategic directions



2007-2010

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Australian Government

Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

AIHW CORPORATE PLAN

Strategic directions



2007-2010

Mission

Better information
and statistics for better
health and wellbeing

The AIHW and this plan

The AIHW is a major driving force in Australia for national information and statistics on health, community services and housing assistance. As an independent statutory body under the AIHW Act, we provide information and do related developmental work. We also have an important role as a custodian of major databases. Our aim is to help inform policies, services and the community and so to improve the wellbeing of Australians.

The Institute enjoys a strong working relationship with a wide range of stakeholders, both government and non-government, who produce or use statistics on health or welfare.

We have around 200 staff in Canberra and a network of collaborations with expert groups across Australia. In 2006 we issued 134 reports covering many aspects of health and welfare. A full description of the Institute and its work is in our latest annual report.

This plan

This plan reflects much consultation with the Institute's staff, with our Board and with policy makers. It outlines the Institute's strategic directions over the next three years and the main actions that follow. It also presents our mission and values.

The plan is deliberately broad and will be the basis for more detailed plans over the period. It is written most of all as a guide for AIHW staff. But it should also be useful to others with an interest in our work.

It is assumed that the strategic directions will proceed largely against a background of our important 'business as usual'. Some parts of the directions will represent a greater focus than previously and some will be new. As the strategies are fleshed out into detailed plans, priorities and resources will dictate what can be done and perhaps what must be discontinued.

Australian Institute of

At a glance...

Mission

Better information and statistics for better health and wellbeing

Role

The AIHW is the national agency set up to provide information on Australia's health and welfare, through statistics and data development that inform discussion and decisions on policy and services.

Strategic directions 2007–2010

1. Strengthening our policy relevance
2. Capitalising on the new information environment
3. Enhancing data access, protecting privacy
4. Getting the messages out better
5. Our people—valued, expert and versatile

Health and Welfare

Values

Our values are:

- **the APS values** being apolitical, accountable, sensitive and fair with the highest quality ethics and leadership
- **objectivity** ensuring our work is objective, impartial and reflects our mission
- **responsiveness** meeting the needs of those who supply or use our information
- **accessibility** making information as accessible as possible
- **privacy** safeguarding the personal and collective privacy of both information subjects and data providers
- **expertise** applying specialised knowledge and high standards to our work
- **innovation** showing curiosity, creativity and resourcefulness in what we do

AIHW



Direction 1

Strengthening our policy relevance

Strategies

We will:

- develop stronger engagement with policy agendas at all levels of government and among the wider community
- build our capacity to do further program evaluations that look at outcomes along with throughput
- enhance our 'whole-of-government' and 'life transition' views, by integrating diverse pieces of data and linking data sets
- develop our information and products to address the policy questions at hand, including providing defensible estimates to respond to urgent and important questions
- offer further explanatory services and products as an option for those policy makers using our reports.

Background

Statistics can both drive and serve policy. In the fields of health and welfare, the Institute plays a leading national role in the development and delivery of such statistics. Stakeholders continue to value the Institute's substantial reports and the great care taken to produce authoritative statistical descriptions. Those statistics provide much detail and help to track the progress of our health and welfare systems. But the information needs of those involved in making policy and running services can be more specific, urgent and sophisticated. So at the Institute we will develop ways of meeting those needs and reinforcing the policy relevance of our work.



Direction 2

Capitalising on the new information environment

Strategies

We will:

- stay closely in touch with key changes in the information environment and their implications for policy, including new data sources and methods that will better support policy
- build our technical and analytical capacity to capitalise on those changes
- examine the potential to fill information gaps through sources that have so far been underused, such as some service administration data, registers and surveys
- build and promote the Institute's expertise with metadata so it can enhance the whole statistical chain, from data gathering through to analysis and reporting
- help lead the thinking about how Australia's health and welfare statistical system can take advantage of the changing information environment.

Background

There are major changes in the information environment. They include the impending electronic health record for clinical medicine and the continuous client record for community services; emerging terminologies in health informatics; the expanding privacy concerns; and a growing awareness that many data sets are being underused. Some of these changes may challenge traditional systems of governing, gathering and analysing information. Equally, they offer opportunities for filling information gaps and for faster, cheaper and more responsive systems. The Institute must capitalise on these opportunities.



Direction 3

Enhancing data access, protecting privacy

Strategies

We will:

- take a strong stance on privacy, promoting the Institute's unique privacy protection along with the benefits of information for national wellbeing
- also take a leading role in promoting the benefits of enhanced access to information and in exploring measures to enhance accessibility
- maintain and apply our knowledge of developments in technology and other approaches that enhance accessibility, as well as developments in privacy legislation
- continue to refuse requests for information when they threaten privacy or do not follow the conditions set by those supplying the base data
- negotiate to bring more health and welfare data sets under the Institute's protective umbrella, to provide greater access to them
- take a leading national role in explaining that privacy and access are mutually beneficial.

Background

Information *and* privacy are both vital for society. Access to information is essential for good planning and more generally it is an important human principle. Privacy is a major value as well, and applies to groups and organisations as well as to individuals. Where privacy is properly enforced this enhances data access by giving confidence to all concerned. At the Institute we have a powerful and unique combination of privacy measures, from the specific protection of the AIHW Act to a variety of strict protocols and systems in processing the data we hold.



Direction 4

Getting the messages out better

Strategies

We will:

- consult users, including policy makers about the best ways to reach them and to present messages that fit their various needs
- consider the variety, modes of delivery, style and detail of our products
- explore new ways to deliver information straight to users, at their desktops
- similarly, explore new ways of helping users to find the information they need and to understand the meaning and quality of the data
- keep developing better ways of distilling our statistics into digestible key messages.

Background

The Institute prides itself on its statistics being sound and thorough—but that is just a start. If our information is to inform policy well, we want it to be widely read and *used*. This means it should be brought to the attention of all who may be interested, including the general public, made easily available to them and presented clearly in formats that suit their various needs. To make good sense of the information, the Institute will continue to explain the concepts behind the data and what sorts of analyses or interpretations those data will or will not support.



Direction 5

Our people—valued, expert and versatile

Strategies

We will:

- support and develop the capabilities of our existing staff in meeting our strategic directions as well as the continuing demands of core business
- when recruiting, do more to publicise the broad range of expertise that the Institute needs
- devise ways of complementing the expertise of our staff—for example, by exchanges with universities and government agencies
- help develop our individual and collective flexibility in responding to the changing demands for information
- develop policies for retaining staff.

Background

People are the heart of our organisation. The Institute strongly values its expert and dedicated individuals and teams and has long aimed to provide employment that is fulfilling, challenging and secure. We have a friendly and nurturing work environment that promotes our professional and personal development. To follow the other strategic directions outlined here, statistical know-how remains vital but is only part of the story. We must ensure we are a versatile and adaptable team with the wide range of skills needed for our directions.





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