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Surveillance of cardiovascular mortality in Australia 1983–1994

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and
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Preface

Cardiovascular disease kills almost 55,000 Australians a year, primarily as a result of coronary heart disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease. Coronary heart disease and stroke alone claim a life every twelve minutes. Direct costs of health care, which include hospital, nursing home, medical and pharmaceutical costs, amounted to \$2.2 billion in 1989–90. Far too many Australians remain at higher risk of cardiovascular disease through cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, overweight and lack of exercise. For such reasons, cardiovascular disease is one of five priority areas in the new program of National Health Priority Areas agreed to at a meeting of Australian Health Ministers in July 1996. (The others are injury, mental health, cancer and diabetes.)

This report monitors changes in death rates from the major diseases which make up cardiovascular disease, such as coronary heart disease and stroke, and is a product of a national system designed to monitor cardiovascular disease, its risk factors, treatment and management based at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. The national system for monitoring cardiovascular disease was developed following extensive consultation with representatives of government and non-government agencies, and public health researchers and epidemiologists.¹ This developmental work was given added impetus by the adoption in September 1994 by the Australian Health Ministers of the report *Better Health Outcomes for Australians*, which recommended that a national monitoring system for cardiovascular disease be established and maintained. Funding has been made available by the Commonwealth Government up to the end of 1998.

The infrastructure of the national monitoring system comprises a National Centre, an Advisory Committee and Regional Collaborating Centres. The National Centre began operations in 1996 within the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. This report, prepared within the National Centre, addresses one of the important functions of the monitoring system: to monitor and report on trends and differentials in cardiovascular mortality.

This report provides a detailed statistical profile of death from cardiovascular disease and its major components for Australia and for each State and Territory. The feasibility of extending the surveillance system to present trends in cardiovascular mortality among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, among rural, remote and metropolitan areas, and by socioeconomic status based on area of residence is being assessed.

1. Bennett S, Dobson AJ & Magnus P 1995. Outline of a national monitoring system for cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular Disease Series No. 4. Canberra: AGPS.

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