

Welfare-related information

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act defines welfare services to include aged care services, childcare services, services for people with a disability, housing assistance (both long-term and crisis accommodation), child welfare services, and other community services. Progress has been made in all these areas, assisted by cooperative working relationships with relevant government agencies at the Commonwealth, State and Territory levels, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and non-government organisations. National minimum data sets have been developed and implemented in many community services sectors, and nationally comparable data are now available in these sectors for the monitoring of community services programs. These achievements are described below in more detail.

A good working relationship has been developed with the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), and effective consultation has been established and maintained on the Institute's work program and resources used on projects related to FaCS. A Memorandum of Understanding has been developed for signing in 2000–01 to formalise this relationship.

Two agreements have been signed during the year on housing assistance information. They are the National Housing Data Agreement (signed by all housing jurisdictions, the ABS and the Institute) and the Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information (signed by all housing jurisdictions, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Torres Strait Regional Authority, the ABS and the Institute). The National Housing Data Agreement is a subsidiary agreement required by the Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement, and a very useful tool for the development of consistent national housing data.

These two Agreements are based on the same principles as the National Community Services Information Agreement. Management committees have been established under these Agreements and senior State officials chair them with secretariat support from the Institute. Data committees, supported by the Institute, have also been established. The Institute's Director has joined the new Housing Ministers' Advisory Committee as an observer, mirroring the long-standing arrangements with the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council and the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council (CSMAC).

The Institute continued to support the work of community services jurisdictions under the National Community Services Information Agreement. The history and the operation of this Agreement were reported in the Institute's *Annual Report 1998–99*. Under this Agreement, a National Community Services Information Development Plan, drafted with the assistance of the Institute, was published in 1999–00.

The Institute has assisted in the specification of work under the plan and its implementation.

Three priority projects agreed by CSMAC are currently being implemented—the development of a juvenile justice minimum data set, a scoping study of family support services, and the development of standards for Indigenous identification in community services data. The Institute has also assisted in developing projects for 2000–01 in the areas of statistical linkage key for community services data, updating the national child protection data framework, and a review of the national community services classification. This plan has also helped the Institute to prioritise its work.

The Institute has completed the compilation of the enhanced Version 2 of the *National Community Services Data Dictionary*, also under the National Community Services Information Agreement.

The work involved in assisting the compilation of the *Report on Government Services* has grown. The report, which is published annually by the Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision, has a tight timetable and is increasingly reliant on data supplied through the Institute. In addition to the provision of data, the Institute has assisted in developing performance indicators and drafting the relevant chapters. The amount and coverage of nationally consistent data provided to the Steering Committee has increased. Assistance provided to the Steering Committee and its working groups covers the areas of aged care, housing assistance, disability services, supported accommodation, and child protection services. To enable the Institute to work cooperatively with Steering Committees, formal business arrangements were agreed with the Productivity Commission, which provides the secretariat to the Steering Committee. Additional information on the business arrangements can be found in the 'Highlights' chapter.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Unit has been funded by CSMAC, under the auspices of the National Community Services Information Management Group (NCSIMG), to investigate Indigenous identification data quality issues in community services collections. The work involves two distinct projects and both are being guided by an NCSIMG-appointed project steering committee. The first project is the development of principles and standards for community services Indigenous population data. Focus groups have been established with a wide range of stakeholders including policy makers, service providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Data collected from the groups will be analysed and form the basis of recommendations to improve data collection and reporting by service delivery agencies. The second project is the evaluation of the quality and completeness of Indigenous data in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and Child Protection data collections. A large

number of agencies are being sampled with regard to the ways in which the Indigenous identifier is collected as part of routine administration, and data reporting arrangements. The project is also assessing requirements of data users and concomitant gaps in current information systems. Plans are in place to undertake a third evaluation project on the national disability data collection.

National Community Services Data Dictionary

With resourcing from CSMAC supported by the AIHW, extensive work has been undertaken in 1999–00 to compile the *National Community Services Data Dictionary* Version 2. A final draft has been completed and has received the endorsement of the National Community Services Data Committee. The Dictionary is expected to be published jointly with the CSMAC in late 2000 after approval by the NCSIMG. This version of the Dictionary expands on the coverage of the previous version and includes data items from disability services, SAAP, home and community services, supported accommodation, and child protection. Work undertaken has included the identification and assessment for suitability for inclusion into the Dictionary of data items currently used in these community services sectors.

Housing assistance

Development of national housing assistance information infrastructure

During 1999–00 the AIHW worked with Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and the ABS to support initiatives to develop the necessary information management infrastructure for housing assistance. This resulted in the signing of two data agreements during the year:

- The National Housing Data Agreement, a subsidiary agreement of the 1999–2003 Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement (CSHA), establishes a framework for the development and provision of nationally consistent data for the CSHA and related programs. The Agreement defines roles and responsibilities and includes three schedules relating to minimum data sets, national performance indicators and national data definitions and standards.
- The Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information provides a framework to improve measurement of outcomes for Indigenous housing.

The Institute's role in successfully developing these two agreements is furthered by the provision of secretariat support for the agreements. Joint membership between the management bodies avoids overlap. The Institute ensures that communication and cooperation between the housing and the health and community services agreements are maintained.

Under the housing agreements the AIHW funds projects in partnership with Commonwealth, State and Territory housing agencies to develop consistent national data collections. These projects cover:

- data development covering data dictionary development, data manuals, and collection methodologies for collecting housing assistance data;
- data collation/collection involving the compilation of State/Territory and national level data; and
- data repository involving the development of national unit record data for housing assistance.

Development of a *National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary*

Under the two housing information agreements, work has progressed on the drafting of the first *National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary*. The initial draft of this dictionary will be distributed to the management groups in July 2000.

Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement data development

Scoping study

From September to November 1999 the AIHW undertook a scoping study for the development of the National Housing Data Agreement (NHDA) under the Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement (CSHA). The major purpose of the project was to more clearly identify the immediate and longer term requirements of the signatories and identify current constraints on meeting these requirements. It also identified the management processes for developing national housing information and provided an initial management plan and work program as a starting point for more detailed considerations. The report of this study was endorsed by the NHDA Management Group and formed the basis of the initial work program under the Agreement.

Performance indicators

In 1999–00 the AIHW contributed to the development, collection and analysis of data for performance measurement across all six programs in the 1996–99 CSHA covering public housing, community housing, private rental, home purchase, the Crisis Accommodation Program, and the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program. Data for public and community housing were forwarded on time to the Productivity Commission for inclusion in the *Report on Government Services*. Data and notes for all six CSHA program areas for the 1998–99 *Housing Assistance Annual Report* was provided to FaCS on schedule.

The Institute also contributed to the development of performance indicators for the 1999–2003 CSHA. In March 2000 the Institute conducted a workshop to develop the detailed specifications of the performance indicator framework.

National data repository

Under the NHDA the Institute is undertaking the Public Rental Housing Data Repository Project for the development of a nationally consistent public rental housing assistance data set.

The main purpose of this project is to contribute to the 1999–00 national performance reporting for public rental housing. The data set may also provide data for bilateral performance reporting. Furthermore the data set will have use outside the area of performance reporting for jurisdiction policy and program analysis as well as for research and evaluation. The use of this data will be under the direction of the NHDA Management Group.

The three components of the data for 1999–00 are:

- data from jurisdiction administrative data systems;
- a national public housing survey (previously called the National Customer Satisfaction Survey); and
- financial jurisdiction administrative data collected through a standard national financial reporting framework.

National Indigenous housing data development

Development of national performance data

In 1999–00 the Institute undertook the collection of performance data for 1998–99 for Indigenous community-managed housing. The National Indigenous Housing Information Implementation Committee endorsed the report on this project. Work has also progressed on the development of a national minimum data set to ensure more uniform reporting of data.

Development of a national Indigenous dwelling data model

During 1999–00 work began on a project sponsored by FaCS, to develop a national data model to identify the key sets of data which need to be monitored and analysed to inform policy and actions for extending dwelling lifespan and limiting dwelling lifecycle costs.

Other data development, collection and analysis

Housing and homeless persons

During 1999–00 the Institute completed the Australian Housing Research Fund project on identifying the housing needs of homeless persons using the national Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) data. The project provided statistical information that describes the characteristics of homeless persons who received accommodation assistance through SAAP-funded agencies across the States and Territories of Australia and examines the housing circumstances of SAAP clients, both before and after receiving SAAP assistance.

Supported accommodation and crisis services

In its role as the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection Agency (NDCA), the AIHW continued to develop, maintain and disseminate information on the provision of services to people who are homeless and/or in crisis. As well as conducting and managing the SAAP national data collection and the Youth Homelessness Pilot Project data collection, statistical analyses were undertaken of supported accommodation and crisis services.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program National Data Collection

The 1998–99 national annual report collated data from four collections (i.e. the main Client Collection, the Casual Client Collection, the Unmet Demand Collection and the Administrative Data Collection), and was released in April 2000. A new weighting system was developed and applied to the SAAP data returned to the NDCA to estimate for agency non-participation in the collection and for incomplete client data. The data published in the reports reflect the new weights. The system was also applied to previous years data published in the reports to ensure that time series data were comparable. A working paper on the new weighting system was published in November 1999.

Summary reports of each agency's SAAP activities in 1998–99 were distributed to all 1,206 SAAP-funded agencies in September 1999. Similar half-yearly reports for the 6 months to December 1999 were released in March 2000. Confidentialised unit record files of the 1998–99 SAAP data were provided to the Commonwealth and State/Territory funding departments in April 2000.

The first comprehensive data collection on accompanying children covered by SAAP was conducted in 1998 and analysed in 1999–00, and a report will be published in October 2000. A collection on SAAP clients on very low or no income was run in May–June 2000. The results will be published in early 2001.

The NDCA commenced a review of the SAAP unmet demand collection to move the collection to a point in time methodology. The new methodology is intended to be implemented in November 2000.

A review of the reports to be produced for the 1999–00 national data collection began in May 2000. The 1999–00 annual national and state reports are expected to be more succinct and considerably more timely.

The 1999–00 client data collection form was reviewed and the revised form incorporates questions for each child accompanying adult clients presenting to SAAP agencies and a question on the achievement of case management goals. Data on these new topics, available in 2000–01, are expected to

inform SAAP administrators about the type of assistance required to meet the needs of families with children and to assess the impact on clients of case management plans.

There has been a large increase in work to satisfy ad hoc requests for data during 1999–00. The complexity of the SAAP data requests also increased as more longitudinal data became available.

The SAAP management and reporting tool (SMART) is a database application developed by the Institute to assist SAAP agencies in the collection and use of information. The tool was upgraded to incorporate changes to the 1998–99 national data collection (Version 1.4) and to ensure that the tool was Year 2000 compliant (Version 2.0). It was upgraded again in the second half of the year to incorporate the abovementioned changes to the client collection form. The new upgrade (version 3.0) will be released in late 2000. SMART is currently used as a data collection tool by a little over 25% of all SAAP-funded agencies.

Youth Homelessness Pilot Project data collection

In association with its work in maintaining the SAAP data collection, the AIHW also managed a data collection on the Youth Homelessness Pilot Project. The project was a Commonwealth government initiative to evaluate a number of early intervention strategies for young homeless people. The project was transformed into a government program, called Reconnect, at the beginning of 2000. This ended the AIHW's involvement in the collection and the final quarterly statistical reports were distributed to all 26 pilot agencies and FaCS in January 2000.

Child protection

The AIHW receives funds from the States and Territories to collect, analyse and publish on an annual basis core data in three areas of child protection: child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations; children on care and protection orders; and children in supported out-of-home overnight care. The latest report, *Child Protection Australia 1998–99*, was released in May 2000.

The Institute plays a key role in the development and refinement of national data collections and performance indicators in child protection, a role it undertakes through its participation in the National Child Protection and Support Services Data Group (NCPASS), to whom it acts as the Secretariat. The report on the NCPASS project, *Comparability of Child Protection Data*, examining comparability of child protection data across Australia and options to improve data comparability, was published by the Institute in December 1999.

Collecting, analysing and publishing national data on adoptions is another of the Institute's responsibilities. The report *Adoptions Australia 1998–99*, released in February 2000, introduced a new set of categories for adoptions and an

expanded set of data items. This new categorisation reflects the changes to adoption regulations and practices that have taken place since the national collection was first established. The Institute also acts as the Australian clearing house for adoptions data required under the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption.

Children's services

A report examining the comparability of the data from the Commonwealth Children's Services Program Census and ABS Child Care Survey and selected State data collections on childcare was released by the AIHW in January 2000. This report informed the development of a proposal for a minimum data set for childcare and preschool services by the NCSIMG Children's Services Data Working Group. On the basis of this proposal, the Institute in conjunction with FaCS produced a draft *Children's Services National Minimum Data Set Data Manual* in May 2000.

A working paper, *Outside School Hours Care Services 1994-97*, using data from the various Commonwealth Childcare Program Censuses, was released in June 2000.

Juvenile justice data development

Commissioned by the Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators and the NCSIMG, the AIHW has commenced the development of a national minimum data set for juvenile justice. Juvenile justice was listed under the National Community Services Information Plan as a priority area needing more effort. Consultation with all jurisdictions, the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Australian Bureau of Statistics has been completed. A data model as well as data items, data definitions and collection methods have been proposed. The project will be completed in 2000-01 and the proposal will be forwarded to juvenile justice administrators for consideration for implementation.

Disability services

National minimum data set for disability services

This national collection is a joint responsibility of the AIHW in cooperation with all jurisdictions under the auspices of the National Disability Administrators. A report on the 1998 national data was released, and material was prepared as feedback to data providers. A preliminary publication on the May 1999 collection was published in a Data Briefing published in March 2000, and performance indicators were prepared for inclusion in the *Report on Government Services*. A statistical linkage key was introduced in all jurisdictions and new analyses were prepared, removing double counting which occurs when clients receive more than one service on

the collection day. The NMDS for disability services has been collected since 1996 and has become an important data collection in the disability services field, satisfying the requirements of the disability administrators at both the Commonwealth and State levels. The data are also used by disability peak bodies for the monitoring of the adequacy of disability services.

Partnership with National Disability Administrators

Three projects have been carried out, supported by and in partnership with the National Disability Administrators (NDA):

- a study of ageing and disability and implications for support services;
- a project to better integrate indicators of demand, input, output, outcome and performance; and
- a joint review by the AIHW and NDA of the Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement Minimum Data Set and associated collection, in the context of changing services structures, information needs and technical capabilities.

Reports of the first two projects have been finalised and will be published early in 2000–01. The third report has been considered by NDA and plans have been made to redevelop the collection, based on the AIHW report.

Disability data development

Work has progressed on the development of standard terminologies, definitions and classifications in the disability field. This work has benefited from the Disability Data and Research Advisory Group (DDRAG) established by the AIHW. National and international elements of the DDRAG work program include the development of nationally consistent data definitions and the revision of the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH). Regular reports are provided to the National Community Services Information Management Group and its data committee.

Using WHO protocols, three studies were conducted of the second draft of the revised ICIDH, published by WHO in mid-1999. The Institute is a WHO Collaborating Centre for the ICIDH, as well as the International Classification of Diseases. A preliminary report on the tests was provided to WHO in June 2000.

Disability data elements were developed and approved for inclusion in the *National Community Services Data Dictionary* – the culmination of some 3 years work with DDRAG, representing a major milestone in the search for greater national consistency in disability data.

National picture of disability services

This project develops and provides a national statistical picture of the demand for and supply of services in Australia to people with a disability—specialised services as well as relevant mainstream services and assistance. During the year, two reports on definition and prevalence of physical disability and acquired brain injury were published.

Aged care

Statistics series

The AIHW produced the sixth and seventh volumes of the Aged Care Statistics series, with the publication of 1997–98 and 1998–99 data on residential aged care facilities. The next volume in the series, *Community Aged Care Packages in Australia 1998–99*, has been completed, and will be released early in 2000–01. These publications fill an important gap in the availability of aged care services information to the public.

Home and Community Care quality appraisal

In 1997 Home and Community Care (HACC) officials of the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments commissioned the AIHW to develop the HACC service standards instrument for use in monitoring the quality of HACC services. The instrument was accepted by HACC officials for national implementation in 1998, and a report on the project, entitled *Developing Quality Measures for Home and Community Care*, was published in the Aged Care Series.

In 1998 HACC officials asked the Institute to undertake a related project to further develop, test and refine strategies for collecting client feedback for input into the quality appraisal process. The Institute started this project in late 1998. The project has been substantially completed, with some analysis remaining to be undertaken in 2000–01.

The International Year of Older Persons

The Institute was involved in a number of activities relating to the International Year of Older Persons. These included the release of a second edition of the highly successful *Older Australia at a Glance*, a collection of fact sheets produced in collaboration with the Office of Older Australians in the Department of Health and Aged Care. Other activities include the contribution of invited articles to special issues of the *Australasian Journal of Ageing* and *Family Matters*, and the presentation of papers to various national and international conferences run to celebrate the International Year. The Institute also contributed to the National Strategy for an Older Australia via its presence at various forums and meetings.

A report on ethnic older Australians, commissioned by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs as part of the International Year, was completed and published jointly by the Department and the Institute.

Community care data development

Throughout the year, development of national data standards for a range of community care programs has been undertaken as part of the Community Care Data Development Project. This project was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and has involved developing and pilot-testing version 2 of the Aged Care Assessment Program Minimum Data Set; developing data definitions for the Community Care Package Program; and developing a conceptual framework for information to support performance measurement and planning across all community care programs. The main goal of this work has been to improve the consistency and comparability of national data on community care provision and related areas.

Welfare services expenditure

The fifth in the current series of *Welfare Services Expenditure Bulletins* was released early in the financial year. It contained detailed analyses of expenditure data for the years 1992–93 to 1997–98, inclusive. The proportion of GDP spent on welfare services rose from 1.7% in 1992–93 to 1.9% in 1997–98. For the first time, expenditure on aged care services (not including nursing homes) and disability services were separated.

Australia's Welfare 1999, which was released during the year, included analysis of expenditure on welfare services from 1988–89 to 1997–98. Although much of that analysis concentrated on 'monetary' expenditure by governments on welfare services, the Institute also undertook an estimation of the value of welfare services provided on a voluntary basis by households. This involved analysis of data collected by the ABS during the course of the 1997 Time Use Survey.

The AIHW's estimates indicate that the value of unpaid welfare assistance provided by households during 1997–98 was \$24.5 billion. This was almost 2.5 times total monetary expenditure on welfare services (\$10.9 billion). These estimates and the method used to derive them formed the basis for a presentation by the Institute at the Seventh International Research Seminar on 'Issues in Social Security' in Stockholm.

Evaluation

Working relations with various government departments in statistical and analytical work have been positive in 1999–00. This has been assisted by structure established under the national information agreements, now signed by both the community services administrators and the housing assistance administrators. By providing the secretariats to the information management groups and participating in the related data committees and working groups, the AIHW has gained awareness of the context of its work, the demand and

the priorities. In the same way, by participating in the working groups of the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision, the Institute gains insight into how its work can be more useful for the Review.

The information agreements are a very important infrastructure that gives incentive to and enables the full participation of policy departments in statistical work. The lack of enthusiasm in the past in developing administrative systems to produce nationally consistent data had been a reason for the difficulties in developing quality community services data. With the commitment shown by policy departments by the signing of the information agreements, this is now set to change rapidly.

However, the participation in such a wide range of working groups has put some pressure on Institute staff time and resources, in particular those participating in meetings. As some of the projects move from a developmental phase to a more routine data collection and analysis phase, the requirement to participate in all working groups may reduce. However, this would require close monitoring.

Thus far, efforts have been devoted to developing data in particular community services sectors to meet the requirements for program management in these sectors. There is, however, a demand for information that cuts across program sectors so that the implication of action of one service program on another (or their interrelationship) can be better understood and assessed. Information that is client-focused rather than program-focused is important. As national minimum data sets in program areas are developed and implemented, the linking of data systems of these sectors and their joint use will be an area requiring further resources and efforts. The Institute will work with the information management groups to further this area of work.

The Commonwealth, States and the Territories continued to be important sources of funds for data development work in 1999-00. It is expected that this will continue in 2000-01. Contract funding carries with it uncertainty from year to year, but ensures that the Institute aligns its activities to the statistical needs of clients.