

Australia's welfare 2007

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Please note that as with all statistical reports there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report over its life. Please refer to the online version at <www.aihw.gov.au>.

Australia's welfare

2007

The eighth biennial welfare report of the
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare



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Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

The Hon. Tony Abbott MP
Minister for Health and Ageing
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

On behalf of the Board of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare I am pleased to present to you *Australia's welfare 2007*, as required under subsection 31 (1A) of the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*.

I commend this report to you as a significant contribution to national information on welfare services and assistance and to the development and evaluation of welfare policies and programs in Australia.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Collins'.

Hon. Peter Collins, AM, QC
Chairperson of the Board

14 November 2007

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Preface



If a society is to be judged by the way it cares for its most disadvantaged members, then the regular reporting of Australia's welfare is fundamentally important. Every 2 years, this report shows the substantial support and assistance provided through both government and non-government mechanisms across wide areas of our lives. It also describes the ways in which we as individuals support others who require our assistance.

In *Australia's welfare* we bring together information and analysis about the service systems set up both formally and informally to redistribute resources on the basis of need. In doing so, we aim to provide a picture that will assist Australians, no matter their level of influence, to be armed with evidence to make improvements. *Australia's welfare* is not just aimed at policymakers and those who deliver programs; it is also intended to be a valuable resource for those in the community who want to understand better how these systems operate. After all, it is educated lobbying by the community that provides much of the real impetus for improvement.

It is 15 years since Australia's parliament decided that the Institute must carry out its national welfare reporting function every 2 years. As this 2007 volume shows, it has been a period of growth in prosperity for Australia—growth in resources, in employment, in life expectancy. But prosperity and longevity bring their own challenges. So it is important to see how welfare resources have responded—have the needs changed because the distribution has improved or has the response changed so that assistance is now delivered differently or aimed at people in different circumstances?

Undoubtedly the picture of improvement is a complex and mixed one. Housing stress remains an issue for many households, and the role of poor interpersonal relationships and domestic violence in creating crises in the lives of families remains a challenge. With the ageing of the population come increased years of life, some of which will be lived with disability. In the year which marks the 40th anniversary of Indigenous people being counted in the census, we still don't have very reliable information on whether and where the situation of Indigenous Australians is improving.

We believe that in this report we provide the best evidence available to shed light on Australia's welfare services. The quality of the statistics and data that underpin the various analyses is a tribute to those who care about getting these things right—not only within the AIHW (where the administrative data sets are collated and managed) and the ABS (on whose survey statistics we draw), but across all kinds of services in the community. I hope you will find this analysis of Australia's welfare an interesting, informative and influential read.

Penny Allbon
Director, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Symbols

N	number
M	million
B	billion
\$	Australian dollars, unless another country is specified
%	per cent
nec	not elsewhere classified
'000	thousands
n.p.	when used in a table—not published by the data source
n.a.	when used in a table—not available
nfd	not further defined
. .	when used in a table—not applicable
—	when used in a table—nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)
*	when next to a numerical value in a table—estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution
**	when next to a numerical value in a table—estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use