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## 2 The compendium of Indigenous data

The primary aim of the compendium is to provide an easily accessible collation of Indigenous data from the *Report on Government Services 2006* (2006 Report). Currently, information and data on Indigenous people are contained within the discussion of each specific service delivery area of the Report.

The report on *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2005* (SCRGSP 2005) is a separate report from the Report on Government Services. The data contained in this compendium (obtained from the 2006 Report) — focussing on the efficiency and effectiveness of specific areas of service delivery — can provide information that complements the material in the Indigenous Disadvantage Report.

### Improvements in reporting of Indigenous data

Improvements to the Indigenous data within the 2006 Report were made in the education, health, community services and housing chapters. These included:

- *Education*: ‘Vocational education and training’ (chapter 4) has been improved by inclusion of a stand-alone indicator for Indigenous people participating in VET.
- *Health*: ‘Primary and community health’ (chapter 10) has been improved by inclusion of Indigenous data for the ‘hospitalisations for vaccine preventable conditions’ and ‘hospitalisations for diabetes’ indicators (previously reported in ‘Public hospitals’ (chapter 10)).
- *Community Services*: ‘Aged care services’ (chapter 12) has been improved by reporting of age and sex-specific usage rates by remoteness category for Indigenous populations. A combined rate is provided for high and low care residential services and Community Aged Care Packages.
- *Housing*: In chapter 16 (‘Housing’) data are reported for the first time on customer satisfaction with State owned and managed Indigenous housing.

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## **Timeliness**

Recent data are more useful for policy decision making, but there can be a tradeoff between the accuracy of the data and their timeliness. The Review's approach is to publish imperfect data with caveats. This approach allows increased scrutiny of the data and reveals the gaps in critical information, providing the foundation for developing better data over time.

Table 2.1 provides a stocktake of data on Indigenous Australians in the 2006 Report, indicating which services have reported on at least one comparable performance indicator, or have descriptive data, for all jurisdictions. The table does not signify the quality of the data.

## **Care in interpreting Indigenous data**

Readers should exercise caution in interpreting data on services to Indigenous people within this compendium and the 2006 Report.

The task of collecting data on Indigenous Australians is complicated by the fact that many administrative data collections do not distinguish between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients. The method and level of identification of Indigenous people appear to vary across jurisdictions. Further, surveys do not necessarily include an Indigenous identifier; where they do, this may not provide for sufficient sampling to provide reliable results.

**Table 2.1 Reporting of at least one comparable data item on Indigenous Australians, 2006 Report**

<i>Service area/indicator framework</i>	<i>Descriptive</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Outputs</i>		
			<i>Equity</i>	<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>Efficiency</i>
<i>Education</i>					
Education preface	✓	x	x	x	x
School education	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
VET	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
<i>Justice</i>					
Justice preface	x	x	x	x	x
Police services	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Court administration	x	x	x	x	x
Corrective services	✓	x	x	✓	x
<i>Emergency management</i>					
Fire events	x	x	x	x	x
Ambulance events	x	x	x	x	x
Road rescue events	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Health</i>					
Health preface	✓	✓	x	x	x
Public hospitals	✓	x	x	x	x
Maternity services	x	✓	x	x	x
Primary and community health	✓	✓	x	x	x
Breast cancer	x	✓	x	x	x
Mental health	✓	✓	x	x	x
<i>Community services</i>					
Community services preface	✓	x	x	x	x
Aged care services	✓	x	✓	x	x
Services for people with a disability	x	x	✓	✓	x
Children's services	x	x	✓	x	x
Child protection	✓	x	x	x	x
Out of home care	✓	x	x	✓	x
SAAP	x	✓	✓	✓	x
<i>Housing</i>					
Public housing	✓	x	x	x	x
Community housing	✓	x	x	x	x
State owned and managed Indigenous housing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Commonwealth Rent Assistance	x	✓	✓	x	x

SAAP = Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. ✓ At least one data item is reported. x No data are reported.

Source: 2006 Report, p. 2.18, table 2.4.

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## Improving Indigenous data

The ABS has an important role in improving Indigenous data collections. Some of the work being undertaken by the ABS includes:

- an ongoing program to develop and improve Indigenous data flowing from Australian, State and Territory administrative systems
- work with other agencies to ensure Indigenous people are identified in relevant systems and that statistics are of adequate quality. Priority is initially being given to the improvement of births and deaths statistics in all states and territories. Other priorities include hospitals, community services, education, housing, and law and justice statistics
- work with other agencies to develop and support national Indigenous information plans, Indigenous performance indicators and Indigenous taskforces on a number of topics
- an expansion of its Household Survey Program to collect more regular Indigenous statistics, including regular Indigenous general social surveys, Indigenous sample supplementation in regular health surveys and annual Indigenous labour force estimates.

The Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs has established a working party to develop an Indigenous Demographics paper, that aims to identify methodological issues in Indigenous data collections, outline how these are being addressed and identify any remaining gaps.

The Review will draw on these initiatives in future reports.

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## References

SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2005, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2005*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2006, *Report on Government Services 2006*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.