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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 2005* (2005 Report). Currently, information and data on Indigenous people are contained within the discussion of each specific service delivery area of the Report.

### Improvements in reporting of Indigenous data

Improvements to the Indigenous data within the 2005 Report were made in the education, emergency management, health and community services chapters. These included:

- *Education*: The scope of reporting in the 'Education preface' has been improved through the inclusion of additional educational attainment data for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, by broad age, sex and highest level of school completed, by State and Territory.
- *Health*: The Public hospitals chapter (chapter 9) three indicators neonatal and fetal death rates are reported by Indigenous status for the first time. In chapter 11 ('Health management issues'), Indigenous suicide data are averaged over three year periods to smooth volatility in year-on-year movements, particularly for smaller jurisdictions, which tend to have fewer cases but relatively large variations in rates from year to year.
- *Community Services*: In 'Aged care services' (chapter 12) new data are reported on Indigenous access to Commonwealth Carelink Centres.

### 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. The most recent data for health expenditure on Indigenous people are from 1998-99.

Table 2.1 provides a stocktake of data on Indigenous Australians in the 2005 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.

**Table 2.1 Reporting of at least one comparable data item on Indigenous Australians, 2005 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	x	✓	x	x
<i>Justice</i>					
Justice preface	x	x	x	x	x
Police services	✓	✓	x	x	x
Court administration	x	x	x	x	x
Corrective services	✓	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
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: 2005 Report, p. 2.17, table 2.4.

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## Care in interpreting Indigenous data

Readers should exercise caution in interpreting data on services to Indigenous people within this compendium and the 2005 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; when they do, it may not provide for sufficient sampling to provide reliable results.

## 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 Review will draw on these initiatives in future reports.