Issues for rural analysis of national data sets

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the work conducted by the Institute over the past two years and the reports soon to be released. It does not report any of the findings.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, funded by the Office of Rural Health and guided by the Rural Health Information Advisory Committee (RHIAC), has been working on a number of rural health reports over the past two years. They are nearing completion and will be released over the next few months. These reports include:

- a framework for rural health information (about 200 pages), describing the range of issues of importance in describing rural health status, health determinants and health system performance. It contains a number of new and we believe more appropriate methods of describing and comparing health across regions and describes and evaluates a wide range of data sources; and

- an analysis of mortality of people living outside Major Cities, including comparisons with people who live in Major Cities (about 300 pages). It describes trends over time, gives overall and age-specific death rates and quantifies the number of “extra” deaths that occur outside Major Cities. This analysis is conducted for a wide range of causes of death, by sex and by age, using ABS Remoteness as the geographic classification. Most importantly, this report distinguishes between differences in mortality that result from a population’s remoteness and those that results from poorer Indigenous health;

- a report summarising the mortality document, and draws out the main findings (about 25 pages);

- a report against the framework (about 300–400 pages), in which measures of health status, health determinants and health system performance are reported. Data has been obtained from a wide variety of sources with reporting by ABS Remoteness, and where possible, by sex, Indigenous status, age group and over time. This report is a substantial and far more comprehensive update of the 1998 AIHW publication “Health in rural and remote Australia”;

- a geographical concordance (about 40–50 pages). We have recently experienced a minor epidemic of geographic classifications. This report seeks to de-mystify and, as much as possible, translate between three of them; RRMA, ARIA and ABS Remoteness.

Once completed, the full reports will be available for sale from AIHW and will also be published on the AIHW website: www.aihw.gov.au