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## **NEW SOUTH WALES OLDER PEOPLE'S HEALTH SURVEY 1999**

**NSW HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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Produced by:

Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch  
Public Health Division  
NSW Health Department  
Locked Bag 961  
North Sydney 2059  
PH (02) 9391 9676  
FX: (02) 9391 9232

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## FOREWORD

I am pleased to present this report on the *New South Wales Older People's Health Survey 1999*, which provides comprehensive information on the health and well-being of older people in NSW.

A planned approach to policy and service provision in NSW for older people, based on high quality data and research, and supported by equitable and sustainable resourcing, is one of the objectives of the *NSW Healthy Ageing Framework 1998–2003*. The NSW Government has undertaken to improve the information collected about older people so that policies, programs and services better meet the needs of older people in the areas where they live.

Key objectives of the *Healthy Ageing Framework* also include: increasing the participation of older people in the workforce, education, leisure and volunteering; provision of accessible and supportive living environments that make it possible for older people to live as independently as possible; and promotion of independence, well-being and health for older people through the provision of health, accommodation, care and support services.

The Older People's Health Survey was a telephone survey of randomly selected households in NSW. The survey was carried out by the NSW Health Department in late 1999 and early 2000 in response to the need for timely, reliable and relevant information on the lifestyle, health and well-being of older people. Over 9,000 people aged 65 years and over agreed to participate. The survey was funded by the NSW Health Department and the NSW Ageing and Disability Department.

This report supports the objectives of the *Healthy Ageing Framework* by providing baseline information against which future progress can be measured. The report commences with information on: lifestyle including housing and living arrangements, employment, social activities, voluntary work and caring for others, transport, personal safety and hopes and fears for the future. Separate chapters cover a range of health issues including: self-rated health, use of health services, nutrition and food security, physical activity, physical functioning, falls, mental health and well-being, diabetes, and oral health. Use of community services is included as a separate chapter, as is the important role of older people as carers in the community.

The majority of older people who participated in the survey were able to answer questions on their own behalf. However, a small proportion of older people who agreed to participate were unable to answer questions themselves for a variety of reasons. In these cases, a proxy informant participated in the interview on the older person's behalf. This group of older people have special problems and needs and information on their health is presented separately in this report.

The NSW Older People's Health Survey was the first of a proposed series of surveys focusing on specific population groups. In 2001, the NSW Health Department will run a survey of the health of NSW children aged 0–12 years.

Further information on the surveys can be obtained from the NSW Health Department's Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch, which runs the NSW Health Program. Comments on the Survey Program and this report are very welcome.

I thank all those individuals and organisations who gave their time and expertise to assist in the development of the survey questionnaire and to assist in the interpretation of the results.



Andrew Wilson

Deputy Director-General Public Health  
and Chief Health Officer