

## From the Book Review Editor

**THIS REVIEW SECTION** covers a diverse collection of recent health reports, web sites and book reviews from the fields of nutrition and dietetics and social work. I am sure the links and book reviews will provide you with useful information and add to the understanding of a wide range of contemporary health policy and management issues. Happy reading!

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### Report watch

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has released its eleventh biennial report on the health and wellbeing of the nation. *Australia's Health 2008* is a comprehensive examination of the health system and health status across Australia. The report is available for purchase or free online viewing at <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10585>>

(ISSN 1032-6138; ISBN 13 978 1 74024 762 7; AIHW cat. no. AUS 99; 624pp; \$60.00)

Since the last edition of AHR a range of recent reports and reviews have been released. A few are listed below for your perusal.

- *A set of performance indicators across the health and aged care system* (published 31 Jul 2008). Available at: <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/indicators>>
- *Injury as a chronic health issue in Australia* (published 15 Sep 2008). Available at: <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10510>>
- *Cancer survival and prevalence in Australia: cancers diagnosed from 1982 to 2004* (published 22 Aug 2008). Available at: <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10484>>

- *Public health expenditure in Australia 2006–07* (published 3 Sep 2008). Available at: <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10614>>
- *Public and private sector medical indemnity claims in Australia 2005–06: a summary* (published 8 Aug 2008). Available at: <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10613>>
- *Mental health services in Australia 2005–06* (published 6 Aug 2008). Available at: <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10594>>

Additionally, a website worth visiting is that of the newly formed National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (<http://www.nhhrc.org.au/>). The Commission, set up under the Rudd Labor Government, is seeking to develop a range of recommendations around high-level guiding principles on what the health care system in this country should look like in the future. I recommend a look at the guiding principles if nothing else. I will report on the final submission when it is released.

## Book review

*Doing Health Policy in Australia*

Dugdale P

Allen and Unwin, 2008

ISBN: 978 1 74175 395 0. vii + 239 pages. RRP: \$45

**THIS BOOK ADDS** to a string of recent offerings on Australian health policy in this country. What separates this text from the others is the way in which it practically and plainly leads the reader through the mire that is Australia's health policy and in doing so provides a coherent discussion on the forces that shape the face of Australia's health system.

The author divides the book into ten chapters that start with examining the health policy scene and the nature of health. The text then explores issues around governing doctors; the public health system in Australia; and Medicare. Finally, the book moves to helping the reader understand quality, safety and governance; and Indigenous health policy and health protection. What is pleasing is the chapter on health policy activism. This chapter not only explores activism but also includes a section on writing policy. Each chapter is relatively short but

provides the essential elements for understanding the key concepts.

Don't be put off by the author periodically writing in the first person — it adds to the personal journey as Dugdale unravels the mystery of our complicated health system. It's a toss up as to why this is a useful text and should find broad appeal as a primer into Australian health policy. It could be because the author has used his extensive personal experience as a health practitioner and has written it from a practical rather than an academic perspective, or, alternatively, his very inviting and unassuming writing style. (A testament to the author's pleasing writing style is his ability to tell the story without relying on a raft of tables and figures to explain key concepts.)

Either way, it doesn't matter — the book works and should be included in your reading list.

Reviewer rating: ★★★★★☆

