



ARE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS POLICIES CONDUCTIVE TO REMOVING HEALTH INEQUITIES?

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Indigenous mortality rates

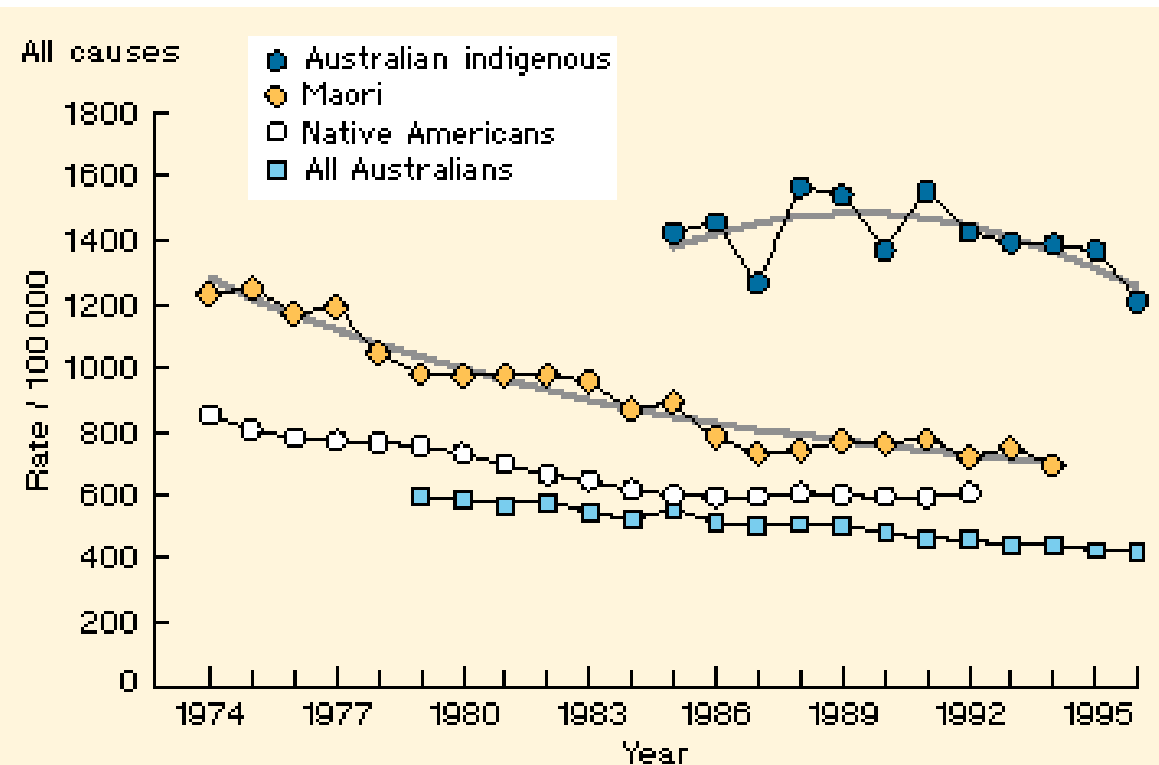


Figure 1: Trends in annual directly standardised* all-cause mortality rates for indigenous people in Australia, the United States and New Zealand, and for all Australians. * Standardised to the World Standard Population, 1960.

Graph from: National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2003-2013 Commonwealth of Australia, July 2003



Contemporary Indigenous policy issues

- Self-determination



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- Self-determination

In a century of U.S. efforts to improve Indian economic and community conditions, Indigenous self-determination is the *only* policy that has had broad, positive, sustained results.

-Cornell 2004



Contemporary Indigenous policy issues

- Self-determination
- Mutual obligation & SRAs



Contemporary Indigenous policy issues

- Mutual obligation & SRAs

SRAs spell out what communities, governments and others will contribute to achieve long-term changes in Indigenous communities. They are made at the local level.

-OIPC 2004



Contemporary Indigenous policy issues

- Self-determination
- Mutual obligation & SRAs
- Mainstreaming & the “whole-of-government” approach



Contemporary Indigenous policy issues

- Mainstreaming & the “whole-of-government” approach

Simply put, this is a failure of effective communication and lack of capacity among Government agencies.

- Arabena 2005



Contemporary Indigenous policy issues

- Self-determination
- Mutual obligation & SRAs
- Mainstreaming & the “whole-of-government” approach
- Welfare - to - work



Contemporary Indigenous policy issues

- Welfare - to - work

The substantive freedoms we respectively enjoy to exercise our responsibilities are extremely contingent on personal, social and environmental circumstances ... The argument for social support in expanding people's freedom can, therefore, be seen as an argument for individual responsibility.

- Sen 1999



Contemporary Indigenous policy issues

- Self-determination
- Mutual obligation & SRAs
- Mainstreaming & the “whole-of-government” approach
- Welfare - to - work
- Remote communities

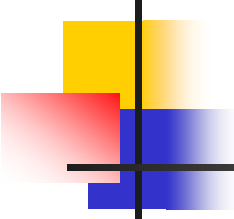


Contemporary Indigenous policy issues

- Remote communities

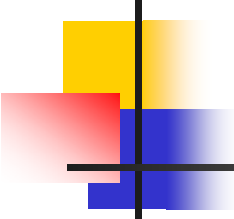
Today both the costs and the benefits of staying remote are palpable and widely observed, so the imperative remains to refine our theorising and analysis to better comprehend the nature of the Aboriginal responses.

- Tonkinson 2006



Is Indigenous health status improving? (1)

- There are significant limitations on both the availability and the quality of data.
- There is some evidence of slow but steady improvement in indicators of health determinants (education, employment, housing) over the past 30 years (eg Altman).
- However, more closely the data is examined, the less likely it is that significant improvements can be shown (e.g WA Child Health Survey for education, Gregory for employment).



Is Indigenous health status improving? (2)

- Apart from a decline in under-5 mortality (due to health care interventions?), health status has not shown much improvement, although there is some cause for optimism (e.g. ABS/AIHW 2005, Thomas 2006).
- On the other hand, some health indicators, e.g. suicide rates, have dramatically worsened over the same period.
- The gap has not narrowed.
- No evidence yet that the 'new arrangements' have had an effect on trends.



ARE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS POLICIES CONDUCIVE TO REMOVING HEALTH INEQUITIES? (1)

- The neo-liberal economic orientation of the Government is likely to lead to greater socioeconomic and health inequalities.
- Contemporary Indigenous policy is driven by ideology rather than evidence.
- The structural and social influences on health are being ignored.
- Inadequate resources are being put towards addressing the inequalities.



ARE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS POLICIES CONDUCTIVE TO REMOVING HEALTH INEQUITIES? (2)

- Indigenous people are not being sufficiently engaged by policy-makers in addressing the issues.
- The contemporary Indigenous policy environment is marked by uncertainty, vacillation and confusion.
- The focus on community and family dysfunction ignores the strengths in Indigenous social networks.



ARE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS POLICIES CONDUCTIVE TO REMOVING HEALTH INEQUITIES?

The emerging conservative narrative is little more than a return to assimilation ... essentially it regards Aboriginality as a deficiency, a burden that handicaps Aboriginals in the modern world and should be shed.

- Hal Wootten 2003



ARE CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS POLICIES CONDUCTIVE TO REMOVING HEALTH INEQUITIES?

I am very unhappy – as most Australians are – at the health standards of Aboriginal people. They still lag way behind the rest of the community, and it is not just a question of money, because more money has been put into Aboriginal health. It is a question of culture. It is a question of practice. It is a question of attitude. It is a question of community responsibility.

Prime Minister John Howard 2004



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... in the new arrangements, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are beholden to government, who determines whether we can control our own affairs. This determination is dependent on society's views of our competence, and this competence is measured only in terms that describe our contribution to the market economy.

Kerry Arabena 2005



Meanwhile, in Canada.....

- The Kelowna Deal