

I Introduction

Injuries are a significant public health issue with over five million injury-related deaths worldwide each year (Krug et al, 2000). In Australia, injury is the leading cause of death for individuals aged 44 years or less (Kreisfeld and Harrison, 2005). Around 2,500 individuals are fatally injured in New South Wales (NSW) each year (Schmertmann et al, 2004). While injury-related mortality represents a portion of the injury burden in NSW, many more individuals are hospitalised in NSW following an injury. Together lifetime injury-related mortality and morbidity were estimated to cost \$3.53 billion in NSW during 1998–1999 (Potter-Forbes and Aisbett, 2003).

Injuries are preventable occurrences and through examining their frequency and causes, appropriate injury prevention strategies can be developed. There has been a range of interventions developed that are effective in preventing injuries, such as changes in legislation, regulation or policies, improved enforcement, environmental changes, improvements in design, and changes in individual behaviour (National Injury Prevention Advisory Council, 1999). The prevention of injury-related morbidity and associated disability in the community leads to cost savings in both direct and indirect costs associated with these incidents, including cost savings associated with medical treatment and long term care (Miller and Levey, 2000).

Access to information on hospitalised injury and detailed analysis and reporting of this information assists in establishing the magnitude of hospitalised injury and in the identification of areas for injury prevention activities. This report provides an overview of the causes of hospitalisation for NSW residents. It describes the trend of hospitalised injury of NSW residents for selected injury mechanisms from 1989–1990 to 2003–2004, and presents a detailed analysis of select injury mechanisms during 1999–2000 to 2003–2004.