



Causes of Death Amongst the Elderly in South Australia

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The state of South Australia has the largest proportion of elderly persons in Australia with more than 15 % aged 65 years or more. The proportion of persons aged 85 years or more is nearly 2 %. Females comprise 56% of the population aged 65 years or more and 69% of the population aged 85 years or more. In 2001, life expectancy at birth was 77 years for males and 82.5 years for females. A male surviving to age 65 can expect to live for another 17 years, while a male surviving to age 85 can expect to live for another 5.5 years. The corresponding figures for females are 21 and 7 years respectively. The major causes of death in the elderly population consist of circulatory diseases, neoplasms, respiratory diseases and external causes. The paper examines the trends in the major causes of death amongst the elderly population of South Australia by sex and relates them to socio-economic and indigenous status. It also examines the trends in life expectancy in relation to disability status.