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## F Institutional arrangements in the early childhood development sector

All levels of government play a major role in the early childhood development (ECD) sector. The institutional arrangements that affect the sector are shaped by the policy settings and the services provided by the Australian, state, territory and local governments. The sector is subject to a multitude of policies, which differ substantially between different types of services and across jurisdictions. The Australian Government contributes most of the funding for early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, and state and territory governments are responsible for licensing and enforcement. Local Governments (and the ACT government in the case of the ACT) directly provide some services. Recent changes aim to establish a nationally consistent policy framework for ECEC. Within child health and family support services, the role of the Australian Government focuses on funding and policy setting, while state and local governments both fund and deliver services.

This appendix describes the key policies affecting the ECD sector and the roles each level of government performs, including licensing, monitoring, enforcement, funding and provision of services. The first part sets out the institutional arrangements for ECEC, beginning with the role of the Australian Government, and then surveying the states and territories (describing the roles of both the state and local governments). Similar discussions follow for child health and family support.

### F.1 Early childhood education and care: the role of the Australian Government

#### Licensing

The Australian Government does not regulate or licence ECEC services. To be eligible for funding from the Australian Government, however, some services must be registered or approved by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). These services include long day care (LDC), preschools, family day care (FDC), outside school hours care (OSHC) and occasional care (OC). Public preschools receive funding from the Australian

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Government, as part of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education (NPA ECE), but are not required to be registered or approved by DEEWR (ACT Government, sub. DR338).

Approved providers are licensed by state or territory authorities and are accredited by the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC). LDC and FDC services must also operate for at least 8 hours a day on normal working days for 48 weeks a year. Registered providers are not subject to these requirements (box F.1).

### **Box F.1 ECEC terminology**

#### **Approved ECEC services**

ECEC services can apply to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to be approved by the Australian Government. An approved service is required to:

- have any required licence to operate from the relevant state or territory licensing authority
- operate for at least 8 hours a day on normal working days for 48 weeks of the year, if they are a long day care (LDC) or a family day care (FDC) service. Separate requirements for operating hours are in place for outside school hours care (OSHC) and occasional care (OC).

To be approved by the Australian Government, LDC, FDC and OSHC services must also be accredited (or registered for accreditation) with the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC). Accreditation requires a service to complete a quality assurance process. Participation is optional, though the vast majority of mainstream services are participating in the quality assurance process via NCAC.

#### **Government assistance**

Parents who use an approved service are eligible for the Child Care Benefit (CCB), which is often paid to services on behalf of parents to reduce fees. They can also receive the Child Care Rebate (CCR) for out-of-pocket costs if parents meet the 'work, training, study' test.

#### **Registered child care**

Registered child care is provided by individuals, such as preschool teachers, nannies, grandparents, other relatives or friends, who directly provide care for children and are registered as carers with the Australian Government's Family Assistance Office. A person can apply to become a registered carer if they have a tax file number, are aged 18 years or over, or have a qualification to provide nanny, childcare or home-based help services.

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**Box F.1** (continued)

Preschools, some OSHC services and some OC centres can provide registered care if the individual carers or teachers are registered with the Family Assistance Office. The preschool itself, as well as staff who do not directly provide care for children, cannot be registered carers.

**Mainstream services**

Mainstream services are services approved to administer the CCB, including LDC, FDC, in-home care, OC and OSHC.

**Non-mainstream services**

Non-mainstream services provide ECEC in areas where mainstream services are not available, and include Indigenous-focused services. Services are primarily operated by not-for-profit organisations in rural, remote and Indigenous communities, and are usually not approved to administer the CCB. Services include flexible childcare services, mobile childcare services, Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS), Indigenous playgroups and crèches.

*Source:* DEEWR (2010).

Families using registered care may be eligible for the Child Care Benefit (CCB) if parents meet the 'work, training, study' test, but not the Child Care Rebate (CCR).

The structure of ECEC licensing and quality accreditation will change substantially from 2012, following the introduction of the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care (NQA). Approved by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2009, the NQA introduces a nationally consistent set of quality standards (the National Quality standard, or NQS) for ECEC. The implementation of the NQS will be overseen by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). NCAC will be wound down by 31 December 2011 (COAG 2009j).

The NQS will align state and territory licensing arrangements from 1 January 2012, and will apply to LDC, FDC, OSHC and preschools. It sets out requirements for staff-to-child ratios as well as staff qualifications (table F.1).

**Table F.1 Staff-to-child ratios**  
Australian Government

<i>Service type</i>	<i>Staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Qualified staff-to-child ratio<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
LDC and preschools <sup>c</sup>	0–2 year-old, 1:4	From 1 January 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 per cent of staff must hold (or be working towards) a diploma-level qualification (or above)</li> <li>• All other staff must hold (or be working towards) a certificate III qualification</li> <li>• All services must employ an early childhood teacher<sup>a,b</sup></li> </ul>	From 1 January 2014
	2–3 year-old, 1:5 > 3 year-old, 1:11	From 1 January 2016	As above	From 1 January 2014
FDC	1:7 (no more than 4 children < 6-year-old)	From 1 January 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FDC educators must hold (or be working towards) a certificate III qualification</li> <li>• Coordinators must have a diploma-level qualification</li> </ul>	From 1 January 2014
OSHC	.. <sup>c</sup>		.. <sup>c</sup>	
OC <sup>d</sup>	..		..	

<sup>a</sup> Services catering for fewer than 25 children should have access to a teacher for 20 per cent of the operating hours. Where services cater for 25–59 children, an early childhood teacher must be in attendance for at least 6 hours a day, or 60 per cent of operating hours (if less than 50 hours per week). Larger services will require a full-time teacher, and a second teacher will need to be in attendance at least half time when services are provided to over 60 children. <sup>b</sup> The current requirements for a second teacher in New South Wales for centres with more than 40 children, and an additional teacher for every 20 children thereafter, will be retained. <sup>c</sup> No changes planned at present. Jurisdictions' current OSHC staff-to-child ratios and staff qualifications will apply under the NQS. <sup>d</sup> Not included in the NQS. .. Not applicable.

Sources: COAG (2009h, 2010).

Further changes in the ECEC sector are anticipated as a result of the NPA ECE, which was agreed in 2008 (COAG 2009d). The NPA ECE aims to deliver universal access to 15 hours of quality early childhood education to all children in the year

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before formal schooling by 2013. The Australian Government does not regulate the preschool curriculum or the setting in which it is delivered. However, under the NPA ECE, it will require that preschool education programs are delivered by a 4-year, university-trained early childhood teacher (DEEWR ndq).

## **Monitoring and enforcement**

ECEC services accredited by NCAC are monitored through scheduled visits and spot checks to ensure that the required quality standards are maintained. NCAC's accreditation decisions are published, though the reasons behind the decision are not made public. NCAC will cease to operate on 31 December 2011. From 1 January 2012, services will be assessed by state regulators on a number of quality areas under the NQS, and they will be required to display information about their quality rankings (COAG 2009j).

The quality assurance process administered by NCAC is voluntary, though participation is a condition for continued approval by DEEWR. NCAC carries out validation visits and spot checks at accredited services. It can withdraw the accreditation of a service that does not comply with quality standards.

Services that fail to make satisfactory progress through the quality assurance systems are reported to DEEWR by NCAC. DEEWR works with these services to assist them to reach the required standard for accreditation.

## **Funding and provision**

### *Childcare funding and provision*

The Australian Government has primary responsibility for funding child care, though it does not engage in the provision of services. In 2009-10, it was responsible for 81 per cent (or \$3.8 billion) of total government expenditure on children's services (SCRGSP 2011a).

The Government supports ECEC through direct funding — payments to parents, guardians and providers — and indirect funding — payments to institutions and programs that support the ECEC sector.

### *Payments to parents and guardians*

The CCB and the CCR are by far the Australian Government's largest funding programs within the ECEC sector. In 2010-11, CCB expenditure reached

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\$2.1 billion. There were 14 000 ECEC services approved to administer the CCB to over 800 000 eligible families. Expenditure on the CCR amounted to \$1.5 billion (DEEWR 2011e).

CCB is a means-tested payment based on a family's income. The rate of CCB also varies on the number of children in care and the type of care used. Families using approved child care who are on the lowest incomes receive the highest rate of CCB. Entitlement cuts out where income is above pre-set levels. In 2010-11, 80 per cent of families with children in care received the CCB and 33 per cent of families received the full CCB subsidy (DEEWR 2011e).

Families who use approved child care can receive CCB for up to 24 hours per child per week, regardless of their work status. To receive more than 24 hours per week, families need to meet the 'work, training, study test' or have an exemption from the test.

Most families using approved child care choose to have their CCB paid directly to their ECEC service, which reduces the fees they have to pay to the service. Others choose to receive it as a lump sum at the end of the year.

The CCR is not means-tested. This payment provides additional assistance for working families who use approved ECEC by covering half of all their out-of-pocket approved childcare costs, up to a maximum of \$7500 per child per year. This limit is subject to the passage of legislation.

The CCR is paid directly to families either quarterly or as a lump sum at the end of the year. From July 2011, the Government will give parents the option to receive their CCR on a weekly or fortnightly basis, paid either to their ECEC service as a fee reduction, or directly to their bank accounts (DEEWR ndp).

Additional subsidies are available in specific circumstances.

- The Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB) covers all ECEC costs when a child is at risk of serious abuse or neglect, or the family is in exceptional hardship (DEEWR ndt).
- The Grandparents Child Care Benefit (GCCB) also covers the full costs of ECEC. It is paid to grandparents who are the primary carers for their grandchildren and who receive an income support payment (DEEWR nds).
- The Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance (JETCCFA) provides eligible parents with extra financial assistance to help with the cost of approved child care while undertaking activities such as job search, work, study or rehabilitation to help them enter or re-enter the workforce (DEEWR 2011e).

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- The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) assists eligible permanent migrants and humanitarian entrants while they attend English courses, by paying the care costs for their children (DEEWR ndo).

#### *Payments to childcare services*

In 2011-12, the Australian Government will provide around \$350 million through the Child Care Services Support Program. This program contains a number of support mechanisms including payments to support the establishment and ongoing sustainability of services in areas where the market may otherwise fail to provide ECEC. The program emphasises assistance to services in regional and remote locations and areas of socioeconomic disadvantage.

New ECEC services may be eligible to access both establishment and set up assistance, while existing services may be eligible for ongoing sustainability assistance and other operational funding. In 2010-11, 250 ECEC services received establishment assistance, while 1200 services received sustainability assistance (DEEWR 2011e).

Non-mainstream services (box F.1) receive other types of funding. The Australian Government covers the bulk of their operating costs through budget-based funding or non-formula funding. In 2010-11, there were over 340 budget-based funded services (DEEWR 2011e). The Government will provide \$59.4 million over four years to improve the existing infrastructure of non-mainstream LDC centres and increase the qualifications of staff (Treasury 2010).

Further arrangements are in place for centres caring for children with additional needs and Indigenous children (box F.2). Of the 38 Early Learning and Care Centres that are being built by the Government across Australia, six centres will cater specifically for children with autism (DEEWR ndr). The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development provides funding for the establishment of 38 integrated Child and Family Centres, which will provide care, education and other services to Indigenous children in disadvantaged communities (COAG 2009b).

The Australian Government also funds the Inclusion and Professional Support Program, which assists approved ECEC services to develop staff skills and improve access and inclusion of children with additional needs (chapter 8). As part of this program, Inclusion Support Agencies assist ECEC providers in catering for children with additional needs, including providing access to specialist equipment and additional funding. An Inclusion Support Subsidy may be paid to LDC centres to assist with the costs of employing additional staff to support children with high

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needs, as well as FDC and in-home care educators who care for children with high ongoing needs. ECEC services may also be able to access further support, for example through the Bicultural Support Program, which provides additional resources such as a bicultural worker, to assist ECEC services to include refugee or Indigenous children and those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (DEEWR 2009b).

**Box F.2 Integrated services for children with additional needs**

The Australian Government committed funding of \$114.5 million in its 2008-09 budget to build 38 Early Learning and Care Centres (ELCCs). The ELCCs will provide integrated early learning and care in a long day care setting, with a preference for centres being located on school grounds. New South Wales and Victoria will have 11 ELCCs each, Queensland will have six, Western Australia will have five, the Northern Territory and Tasmania will each have two, and South Australia will have one (DEEWR ndr).

The Government has allocated an average of \$1.7 million in capital funding for each location. In cases where the state or territory government chooses to manage the establishment of the centres, it will receive this funding (for example, Tasmania's two ELCCs are managed as part of the State Government's Child and Family Centres project). In other cases, the Government chose appropriate entities in a competitive application process.

The Australian Government will not retain ownership of the centres or provide ongoing funding. The centres will be owned by either state, territory or local governments.

Another 38 Child and Family Centres will be established as part of the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement, which was signed in 2009. These centres will offer services tailored for indigenous children and their families, including child care, early learning, parent and family support programs, though they will be open to all families.

There will be nine centres in New South Wales, 10 in Queensland, five each in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, four in South Australia, two in Victoria and Tasmania, and one in the ACT. The total budget allocation for these centres is \$292.6 million over six years DEEWR (ndi).

*Indirect funding*

The Australian Government provides indirect support to the ECEC sector by funding various programs that enhance the skills of its workforce, encourage additional workers to enter the sector, and ensure quality standards are maintained.

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NCAC is funded by the Government to administer child care quality assurance for LDC, FDC and OSHC. The Accreditation Decision Review Committee works alongside NCAC and reviews any decisions that operators appeal.

Staff training and development contributes to quality assurance. The Professional Support Program, under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program, provides access to professional development and support through a Professional Support Coordinator (PSC) in each state and territory, including for Indigenous ECEC services through Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSU). The coordinator's role is to ensure ECEC staff have access to high-quality, specific professional development, as well as providing support in the transition to the Early Years Learning Framework.

### *Preschool funding and provision*

The Australian Government's role in early childhood education is primarily focused on funding rather than provision, though its funding role has evolved in the past few years. In 2006-07, the states and territories contributed 99 per cent of all funds for preschool programs across Australia (APH 2008). Until recently, Australian Government funding focused mainly on preschool access for Indigenous children, through programs such as the Supplementary Recurrent Assistance Program (DEEWR 2010m). This supplementary funding was provided on a per person and project basis to 1469 preschools, and cost an estimated \$11.9 million in 2010 (SCRGSP 2011c).

Under the NPA ECE, the Australian, state and territory governments are working to deliver universal access to 15 hours of quality early childhood education to all children in the year before formal schooling by 2013. The policy aims to raise the participation rates in preschool education from 73 per cent in 2009 to 95 per cent in 2013. To achieve this goal, the Australian Government is providing \$970 million to the states and territories over five years to support the implementation of the universal access initiative. Funding ranges from \$13.2 million to the ACT to \$278.6 million to New South Wales (DEEWR ndl).

All states and territories signed bilateral agreements with the Australian Government, outlining the actions they will take to achieve universal access. Preschool education is not only provided in a school setting or in a stand-alone facility. Programs can also be delivered within LDC centres, although this differs across states and territories. LDC centres that deliver preschool education benefit from CCB and CCR funding. Stand-alone preschools that operate for longer hours can also apply to administer the CCB (COAG 2009h).

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## Workforce initiatives

In addition to the Professional Support Program, which provides ongoing support to ECEC staff, the Australian Government has put in place a number of initiatives to increase the numbers of ECEC staff and enhance their qualifications.

- Over five years, \$181.3 million has been allocated to initiatives that will train and retain the early childhood education workforce. This includes fee waivers for TAFE courses, additional university places for early childhood teachers, and special funding for teachers working in rural and remote areas (DEEWR ndl).
- The Productivity Places Program (PPP) assists job seekers and existing workers to gain vocational qualifications. According to DEEWR, '[b]etween April 2008 and June 2009, [the] Certificate III in Children's Services was the top qualification for job seekers under the PPP' (sub. 86, p. 28).
- Workers from rural and remote regions can receive funding to access recognition of prior learning assessments to attain ECEC qualifications (DEEWR 2011e).
- Additional support has been offered to Indigenous ECEC staff (DEEWR, sub. 86).

## F.2 Early childhood education and care in New South Wales: the role of the State Government

New South Wales has the largest aggregate expenditure on children's services of all state and territory governments, totalling \$217.2 million in 2009-10. On a per child basis, New South Wales spends \$185 annually, compared with the national average of \$249 (SCRGSP 2011a).

Most of the children's services budget is spent on preschool services. There are 1070 stand-alone preschools operating in New South Wales, mostly community-managed, and they achieve an enrolment rate of 81 per cent in the year before formal schooling (chapter 5).

The private sector dominates the childcare sector, operating 68 per cent of the 2738 services in the State. The number of services has been increasing in recent years, driven by a substantial rise in the number of LDC centres, which offset a decline in FDC (SCRGSP 2011a).

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## Licensing

The New South Wales Community Services agency, within the Department of Human Services, licenses ECEC services under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and the Children's Services Regulation 2004. The regulations cover centre-based children's services, FDC, home-based children's services, and mobile children's services. The New South Wales Government has recently announced that responsibility for all ECEC regulation will be transferred to the Department of Education (DET NSW ndc).

The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* defines a children's service as a service that provides education or care for 6-year-old children and under who do not ordinarily attend school. Regulations cover the premises where the service operates, as well as the staff employed. Staff are required to be fit and proper to care for children (including being over 18 years of age), and the licence holder must ensure staff receive appropriate training. Services are required to adhere to the Act's staff-to-child ratios, and employ appropriate numbers of staff who are trained to work with infants (table F.2).

From 2007, OSHC providers need to register with Community Services. However, there are no operational requirements imposed as part of this registration (Community Services NSW nde).

In July 2008, Community Services began licensing school-based preschools and children's services.<sup>1</sup> Preschools that were operating at the time were only required to demonstrate that their facilities complied with the Act's requirements. New services are required to comply with all aspects of the legislation, including staffing requirements (Community Services NSW ndd).

From January 2011, changes to the Act are expected to streamline the licensing process. Under the old process, licences were issued for specific services, specifying their authorised supervisor. Under the new system, licence holders will no longer have to vary their licences when they engage new authorised supervisors, and licences can now be issued without fixed terms. In addition, the staff-to-child ratios for under 2-year-old children will increase from 1:5 to 1:4<sup>2</sup>, and group sizes will increase. Other parts of the Act will continue to apply until the NQS is implemented in 2012 (Community Services NSW ndf).

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<sup>1</sup> Schools that offer supported playgroups or 'formal education' in the preschool year are exempt from licensing requirements (Community Services ndd).

<sup>2</sup> The increase in the ratios is expected to cost \$23.5 million in additional staff costs, and lead to a reduction in childcare places on offer. Fees are estimated to increase by \$1.34 per day for children attending LDC centres (Allen Consulting Group 2010).

**Table F.2 Staff-to-child ratios**  
New South Wales

<i>Service type</i>	<i>Staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Qualified staff-to-child ratio<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
LDC	0–2 year-old, 1:4 2–3 year-old, 1:8 3–6 year-old, 1:10	Ongoing Until 1 January 2016 Ongoing	1:30–40 children 2:40–60 children 3:60–80 children 4:80+ children	Until 1 January 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services can only accept up to 40 0–2 year-olds, in groups that cannot exceed 12 children</li> <li>• Other limits on group sizes have been removed in January 2011</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff must hold a 3-year university degree in early childhood education</li> <li>• At least one staff member working with 0–2 year-old children must hold a specific qualification (such as a Diploma in Children's Services)</li> </ul>	
FDC	0–12 year-old, 1:7 (no more than five 0–6 year-olds)	Until 1 January 2014	..	
OSHC <sup>c</sup>	..		..	
OC	0–2 year-old, 1:5 2–3 year-old, 1:8 3–6 year-old, 1:10		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One qualified staff member, who holds a Diploma of Child Studies or Children's Services</li> </ul>	

<sup>a</sup> State regulations will continue to apply until NQS requirements come into force. Where state regulations require higher staff-to-child ratios or qualifications than the NQS, these will continue to apply. <sup>b</sup> Qualified staff members are required to hold a degree or diploma in early childhood education. <sup>c</sup> OSHC services are only required to register and are not regulated. .. Not applicable.

Source: COAG (2009h).

## Monitoring

The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and the *Children's Services Regulation 2004* contain provisions for monitoring compliance with the regulations, through visits conducted by children's services officers. Inspections are conducted annually, and 75 per cent of visits are scheduled in advance (SCRGSP 2011a). In 2008, the (then) New South Wales Department of

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Community Services adopted a strategic compliance monitoring and enforcement framework, which includes targeted campaigns investigating areas of non-compliance (Community Services NSW 2008).

## **Enforcement**

Community Services can take enforcement actions against children's services that breach the conditions of their licence. Licences can be suspended or revoked, and licensees can be prosecuted. The new regulations that came into force in January 2011 will allow Community Services to issue compliance and infringement notices and expand the powers of children's services officers (Community Services NSW n.d.). Detailed information about prosecutions and other enforcement activities are provided via the Community Services website (Community Services NSW n.d.).

## **Funding**

The State Government recently announced a review of early childhood education funding. The review will consider the provision of assistance to children from low income households and families in disadvantaged communities (NSW DET 2011).

### *Funding for childcare services*

In 2009-10, the State Government spent \$40.3 million on funding for 1500 childcare services<sup>3</sup>, including \$15.3 million for LDC services and \$11.5 million to facilitate access for children with additional needs. This funding contributes to the provision of 45 300 childcare places (of a total of 135 200 places licensed by the State Government) across LDC, FDC and OC (Community Services NSW 2010a).

### *Funding for preschools*

About \$131.6 million was spent by the State Government on the provision of preschool services in 2009-10 (Community Services NSW 2010a). The New South Wales Government supports community-managed preschools, as well as providing services directly through public schools (see provision, below).

The funding level for each community-run preschool depends on its location, the number of children attending and their background. It can range from \$1250 to over

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<sup>3</sup> This represents over half the services operating in the State.

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\$4000 per child (Community Services NSW nda). In addition, the Department of Education and Training (DET) spends about \$29 million on the provision of preschool services at public schools (NSW Government 2010a).

In 2006, the State Government introduced the Preschool Investment & Reform Plan, which provides over \$77 million in funding to preschools (APH 2008). As part of this program, from 2009, \$29.8 million is allocated per year to increasing the number of places provided and achieving universal access to 15 hours of preschool in line with COAG policy (Community Services NSW nda).

### *Other funding*

Community Services funds the Supporting Children with Additional Needs (SCAN) program. In 2010-11, the department expected to spend \$12.8 million to support the inclusion of children with additional needs in ECEC services.<sup>4</sup> Funding is distributed to service providers via eight community organisations across the state. Funding can be used to employ additional staff, train existing staff or purchase specific equipment (Community Services NSW ndg).

The State Government also provides funding to other organisations related to children's services, such as toy libraries, sector agencies and peak bodies (Community Services NSW ndc).

## **Provision**

The State Government is not involved in the direct provision of childcare services. Through DET, it provides preschool services in 100 public schools across the state. This represents 9 per cent of all preschools in New South Wales (SCRGSP 2011a).

The department funds 11 preschools specifically for Indigenous children. It also offers a preschool program for children in remote areas through distance education, which is delivered through web-based programs, as well as mail and telephone contact between teachers and children. Children with disabilities are offered specific programs through 50 early intervention support classes (DET NSW ndd).

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<sup>4</sup> Eligible services are those that are not approved to administer the CCB, and can include licensed or registered preschools, OC, vacation care and multipurpose services (Community Services NSW ndg).

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Preschools accept 4-year-old children, and are open during school hours.<sup>5</sup> Children can attend for two, three or five days each week (DET NSW nnd). There is no requirement for a certain number of hours to be provided; however, according to DET New South Wales, children in government preschools attend for 17 hours a week on average — the highest of all jurisdictions (APH 2008).

### **Workforce initiatives**

The New South Wales Government has some limited ECEC workforce strategies in place. LDC services can apply for waivers if they cannot employ suitably qualified teachers as required by legislation (chapter 3).

## **F.3 Early childhood education and care in New South Wales: The role of local government**

### **Licensing**

Local councils approve development and building applications for children's services. Operators that wish to open a new service are required to submit their plans both to their local council and to the State Government, and receive approval from both in order to open a service (DoCS NSW nd). Some councils have policy plans that set guidelines for the provision of ECEC services in their area (LGSA 2007).

### **Monitoring and enforcement**

Local governments do not have specific monitoring and enforcement powers that affect ECEC services. Centres that have onsite cooking facilities may be inspected under public health regulations. Some councils coordinate FDC schemes, and as part of their responsibility, monitor the services delivered by FDC educators (see provision below).

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5 Schools are normally open from 9am to 3pm, and each preschool session can last up to 6 hours. This may pose issues to the sector when trying to offer 15 hours of preschool per week under the COAG universal access policies, as it will require children to attend for a minimum of 2.5 days per week (NSW Government 2010c).

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## Funding and provision

Local governments play a large role in the provision of children's services in New South Wales. In 2004-05 (the latest figures available), councils ran 132 LDC centres, 50 FDC schemes, and 15 OC services (LGSA 2006). These accounted for half of all FDC schemes and about 7 per cent of LDC centres (SCRGSP 2010). Some councils also operate preschools.

Councils have been experiencing funding pressures and difficulties finding staff, but continue to provide a large number of services. Some councils, such as Blacktown and Canada Bay, operate more than 20 LDC services, making them substantial operators in the sector.

In addition to direct provision of ECEC services, councils work with the Australian and State Government to deliver a wide variety of children's programs, such as transition to school, toy libraries and playgroups. Councils also contribute to staff training and recognition of prior learning (LGSA 2007).

## F.4 Early childhood education and care in Victoria: the role of the State Government

The *Children's Services Act 1996* and the Children's Services Regulations 2009 provide the legislative framework for ECEC in Victoria. Children's services legislation in Victoria covers a broad range of areas and sets out when a service is required to obtain a licence, and the minimum standards with which services must comply (DEECD 2010j).

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is responsible for administering the Act and the regulations. DEECD is also responsible for the licensing and monitoring of ECEC services. In addition, the Department Secretary has certain powers under the legislation including the power to obtain information, documents and evidence in relation to a serious offence.

The Victorian Government is also responsible for other legislation relevant to ECEC services such as occupational health and safety and anti-discrimination legislation. In addition, the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* provides that all children in Victoria should be able to enrol in a preschool program (preschool programs are referred to as kindergarten in Victoria).

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## Licensing

Services that are required to be licensed by the Victorian Government are those that provide care or education for four or more 13-year-old children and under, in the absence of their parents (or guardians) for a fee (or reward) or while parents use services provided by the proprietor.

Services that require licensing by DEECD are LDC, FDC, preschool, OSHC and OC services. Specific licence types are available as well as an integrated service licence.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, services that are not required to be licensed include care by relatives, private nannies and babysitters operating in the child's own home, services principally conducted to provide instruction in a particular activity or sport (for example, dance), and 6-year-old or older school students being cared for under informal arrangements.

Licensed children's services are required to fulfil a range of requirements including providing an educational or recreational program, and ensuring that child safety and supervisory requirements are met. Children's services are required to meet a range of minimum standards including training and qualifications of staff, staff-to-child ratios, and indoor and outdoor space. Victoria does not regulate group size (DEECD 2010j).

As part of the licensing process a person managing or controlling a children's service will be subject to a 'fit and proper assessment', and will be assessed at least once every five years. The assessments may be relied upon in relation to additional licence applications (DEECD nda).

In LDC services, regulations require a staff member occupying a qualified position to hold an approved two-year post-secondary early childhood qualification or teaching degree (COAG 2009h). Each staff member in a standard licensed service must hold a certificate III, equivalent or superior qualification, though existing services do not need to meet this requirement until 1 January 2014. Some staff members are exempt if they complete an approved professional development course by 1 January 2012 (DEECD nda). All FDC educators must hold a certificate III qualification by 1 January 2014 (DEECD 2010k).

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<sup>6</sup> An integrated service licence is for services that include two or more types of children's services. A short term or a FDC service cannot be operated as part of an integrated licence.

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## Monitoring and enforcement

Children's services are monitored by DEECD to ensure that licensees comply with the requirements of the legislation. Parents concerned about a licensed children's service are encouraged to contact the proprietor in the first instance. The proprietor must then notify DEECD within 48 hours. The proprietor must deal with and respond to the complaint as soon as practicable. They must also notify DEECD within 24 hours in the event of a serious incident.

A range of statutory actions may be taken by DEECD where licensees fail to meet their obligations. These include licence suspension, emergency action, removal of children, licence cancellation and prosecution. Certain non-compliance information about children's services that seriously contravene the Act and regulations may be published (DEECD 2010n). Non-compliance attracts penalties if the matter is prosecuted successfully in court.

## Recent regulatory reform and transitional arrangements

The *Children's Services Act 1996* and the Children's Services Regulations 2009 will continue to apply until 1 January 2012. Service types not included in the NQS will continue to be regulated under the Victorian system (DEECD 2009i).

Recent changes to Victorian legislation, including the introduction of transitional provisions, align Victorian State requirements and the NQS. In May 2009, amendments to the *Children's Services Act 1996* came into effect and the new regulations commenced. Key changes include increased staff-to-child ratios, employment of qualified teachers at all standard services, and minimum qualification standards. Also included for the first time is the regulation of FDC and OSHC services (DEECD 2009h).

Further minor changes were made to the regulations in September 2010, including changes to children's rooms and OSHC outdoor space requirements, and inclusion of staff under 18 years of age in staff-to-child ratios (DEECD 2011c).

Current Victorian staff-to-child ratios for LDC and preschools are broadly consistent with the NQS where they apply to up to 3-year-olds. From 1 January 2012, Victorian requirements will include a higher LDC and preschool staff-to-child ratio (1:4) for 2-year-olds than will be required under the NQS (1:5) from 1 January 2016.

Victorian transitional arrangements for LDC and preschools do not include all improved national standards. From 1 January 2016, the current Victorian

1:15 staff-to-child ratio will change to 1:11 for 3–5 year-olds under the NQS (table F.3).

Other NQS transitional arrangements are also in place, including support for children’s services staff to upgrade or attain early childhood qualifications (DEECD 2010o).

The *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* was enacted in Victoria in October 2010. This key milestone facilitates the national applied law scheme for the NQF. Other jurisdictions will adopt the Act by reference (except Western Australia) (DEECD 2010j).

**Table F.3 Staff-to-child ratios**  
Victoria

<i>Service type</i>	<i>Staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Qualified staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>a</sup></i>
LDC and preschools <sup>b</sup>	0–3 year-old, 1:5	Until 1 January 2012 <sup>c</sup>	0–3 year-old, 1:15	Until 1 January 2012 <sup>c</sup>
	0–3 year-old, 1:4	From 1 January 2012	0–3 year-old, 1:12	From 1 January 2012
	> 3 year-old, 1:15	Until 1 January 2016 <sup>c</sup>	> 3 year-old, 1:30	Until 1 January 2016 <sup>c</sup>
FDC <sup>d</sup>	1:7 (no more than four children < 6 year-old)	Present	..	Present
OSHC	1:15		1:30	
OC	0–3 year-old, 1:5		Various	
	> 3 year-old, 1:15		Various	

<sup>a</sup> State regulations will continue to apply until NQS requirements come into force. Where state regulations require higher staff-to-child ratios or qualifications than the NQS, these will continue to apply. <sup>b</sup> Regulations require each staff member in standard licensed services to hold a certificate III, equivalent or superior qualification, though existing services do not need to meet this requirement until 1 January 2014. Some staff members are exempt if they complete a professional development course by 1 January 2012. <sup>c</sup> Applies to services that existed on 25 May 2009. <sup>d</sup> All FDC educators in Victoria must hold a certificate III qualification by 1 January 2014. .. Not applicable.

Source: COAG (2009h).

## Funding and provision

The Victorian Government provides more than \$190 million per annum for ECEC (SCRGSP 2011a). Program support includes improved access and participation in

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early childhood services, increased integration of ECEC services and support for children with additional needs.

Various organisations that support children's services providers also receive funding. Examples include the community services organisations insurance program, services to support CALD children (preschool programs only) and Kindergarten Parents Victoria (a peak body representing the interests of parents in quality early childhood education) to provide products and services to support early childhood education. The Victorian Government also funds the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), the peak body for local government, to undertake a number of early childhood services-related projects (DEECD 2010p).

### *Childcare funding and provision*

The Victorian Government provides funding for Indigenous community controlled ECEC services, which predominantly provide LDC services but also incorporate other forms of care and education. With the Australian Government, the Victorian Government funds other Indigenous children and family services under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development. Other funding by the Victorian Government includes short-term ECEC for parents and guardians to participate in education (DEECD 2010m).

The Victorian Government also provides some direct funding for ECEC services under its Early Childhood Capital Grants program. It provides contributory grants for new and existing integrated children's education and care services to local government, community based organisations and schools (DEECD 2010m). Other funding includes assistance for newly regulated OSHC and FDC services under its Minor Capital Grants arrangements, including to upgrade resources and equipment that support the delivery of quality educational or recreational programs (DEECD 2010l).

### *Preschool funding and provision*

Preschool funding is provided on the basis of the number of children enrolled. The Victorian Government Kindergarten Program funds preschool programs in stand-alone preschools and LDC settings that are planned and delivered by qualified early childhood teachers. The program also provides additional subsidies for Indigenous children and other eligible children (DEECD 2010m).

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In 2009-10, just over 66 000 children were enrolled in preschool services in Victoria in the year before full time schooling, representing an enrolment rate of nearly 100 per cent (SCRGSP 2011a).

The Victorian Government provides support for Indigenous children experiencing disadvantage by funding preschool programs for 3-year-olds. A number of initiatives support preschools to develop programs that embrace Indigenous culture and increase and enhance participation by Indigenous children (DEECD 2010m).

Under joint funding arrangements with the Australian Government, the Victorian Government funds inclusion support services to provide support and professional services to children with additional needs to enhance their access and participation in government funded preschool programs (DEECD 2010m).

Funding support is also available under the Kindergarten Cluster Management program (a model of management that groups individual services under a single employer), aimed at reducing management pressure on committees and supporting stable and professional management arrangements.

### **Workforce initiatives**

The Victorian Government has put in place a number of programs that aim to enhance the skills of the ECEC workforce and assist services to attract qualified staff to meet NQS requirements. These include support for early childhood educators to upgrade or attain an early childhood qualification (DEECD 2010o) and courses leading to an early childhood qualification for Indigenous Victorians (DEECD 2010m). The Victorian Government also provides support through professional development and online resources for early childhood professionals to deliver the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (DEECD 2009j), which complements the national framework.

## **F.5 Early childhood education and care in Victoria: the role of local government**

### **Licensing**

New ECEC services must obtain a planning permit from their local council. Planning officials look at the requirements for ECEC in the proposed area, as well as zoning and overlays. Other council requirements may include restrictions on centre hours of operation and the number of children attending (City of Casey nd)

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— some of these issues also fall under State Government licensing requirements, duplicating the regulatory burden for operators.

Council policy affecting the ECEC sector are guided by Municipal Early Years Plans, which address the development and coordination of ECEC, health and other services for 0–6 year-olds. Councils in Victoria have developed such plans, which differ based on area-specific demographics and demand and supply dynamics.

### **Monitoring and enforcement**

LDC centres are monitored by local councils to ensure they operate within the provisions of their planning permit. FDC educators that are part of schemes operated by local governments are also monitored to ensure they comply with the quality standards for FDC (see provision below).

Planning permits as well as other forms of support may be revoked for centres that do not comply with the conditions of their permit.

### **Funding and provision**

Victorian councils spend between 7 and 12 per cent of their budgets providing family and community services (DPCP 2009). Council spending includes direct provision of ECEC services, as well as subsidised rent for buildings and facilities, training and resourcing.

In 2009-10, 12 per cent of childcare services in the State were managed by local government — lower than the 14 per cent of services it managed in 2005-06, as private providers have become increasingly prominent (SCRGSP 2011a). According to MAV, local councils are the largest licensee of children's services in Victoria. In 2010, 76 per cent of councils reported they supported FDC services, 40 per cent supported OSHC services and 72 per cent supported LDC services (Municipal Association of Victoria, sub. 68). The majority of councils act as coordinators for FDC, and engage caregivers as contractors rather than employing them directly.

Of the 1217 stand-alone preschools operating in Victoria, 18 per cent (or 220 preschools) are managed by local governments (SCRGSP 2011a). These are managed as stand-alone facilities or as a cluster of preschools. The majority of preschools are community managed, and receive substantial assistance, usually in the form of rent assistance, from local government.

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Preschools also benefit from subsidised use of council facilities, as well as centralised enrolment systems maintained by councils, financial grants and training and resourcing to preschool committees and staff (Municipal Association of Victoria nda).

More than 1000 preschool services offer programs for 3-year-old children. These services are funded by parents, and they receive additional support from councils. In 2006, 66 per cent of councils supported 3-year-old preschool programs (Municipal Association of Victoria nda). Local councils also support the Preschool Field Officer Program, which facilitates the access and participation of children with additional needs in preschool. Officers provide advice and ongoing support to teachers and parents with regard to children with additional needs, assist in the developing of individual programs for children, and provide referrals to specialist services.

## **F.6 Early childhood education and care in Queensland: the role of the State Government**

The Queensland Government contributes to the ECD sector in a number of ways, including licensing and regulating early childhood services, establishing and funding preschool services, and funding a range of family support and child health programs (Queensland Government 2010b).

The health, development, education and wellbeing of young children in Queensland are supported by various government departments, including Communities, Education and Training and Queensland Health. Non-government organisations, local communities, volunteer care providers and the private sector also deliver services, sometimes in partnership with government departments (Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet 2008).

The *Child Care Act 2002* and the *Child Care Regulation 2003* provide the legislative framework for ECEC in Queensland. They cover a broad range of areas and set out the minimum standards services must comply with.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) is responsible for administering the legislation through the Office for Early Childhood Education and Care (Office for ECEC), including the licensing and monitoring of services. This was formerly the responsibility of the Department of Communities.

Building standards for centre-based services are incorporated under the Queensland Development Code. The requirement to meet these standards is linked to the *Child*

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*Care Act 2002* under section 28, which requires services to meet the *Building Act 1975*. The *Child Care Act 2002* makes reference to other legislation with which ECEC services must comply, such as that relating to food hygiene, workplace safety, and local authority provisions (Childcare Queensland nd).

## **Licensing**

The *Child Care Act 2002* (Qld) defines ‘child care’ as care of a child provided by someone other than a relative or guardian, at a place other than the child’s home, for reward and in the course of a service for regularly providing care of children. This includes preschool services, but not pre-preparatory programs. Only services that cater for seven or more children, in the absence of their parents (or guardians) for a fee (or reward), are required to be licensed (COAG 2009h).

Services that require licensing are either centre or home based and comprise preschool (known as kindergarten in Queensland), LDC, OC, limited-hours care, school-age care, and FDC services (COAG 2009h). In contrast, vacation care, adjunct care (for example, gyms where parents remain on site), nannies and babysitters are not required to be licensed (ECEC Queensland 2009a). Likewise, stand-alone services — defined as services that provide care for up to six children in a venue or a home — are not required to be licensed, but must meet certain standards, and are monitored on a complaints basis only (COAG 2009h).

In Queensland, requirements for licensed ECEC services are broad ranging and include activities and experiences, child health and safety, the number of staff and required qualifications, policies and procedures, facilities and space, equipment, and information for parents and carers (ECEC Queensland 2009a). As part of the licensing process the licensee must be suitable, and have a current prescribed notice issued by the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian (Community Services Queensland 2009a).

## **Monitoring and enforcement**

Queensland ECEC services are licensed for a maximum of three years and the Office for ECEC undertakes annual monitoring visits and investigation of complaints (COAG 2009h). Under the legislation, the Office for ECEC has powers to enter and search ECEC services. The *Child Care Act 2002* provides a number of enforcement options, including the power to amend or suspend a licence, or to issue a prohibition notice (Community Services Queensland 2009c). The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian requires a ‘blue card check’ to see if a person is eligible to work with children (CCYPCG 2010).

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Recent changes to the *Child Care Act 2002* provide parents, guardians and the wider community with access to information about non-compliant ECEC services. From 1 February 2010, DET Queensland is able to publish incidents of serious non-compliance (such as action taken to suspend a licence) or repeated non-compliance that expose a child to more than minor risks to safety and wellbeing (DET Queensland nda). Further changes ensure that ECEC services keep log books of their compliance history to provide parents with access to quality of care information at the local level (SCQL nd).

## **Preparedness for national reform**

### *Universal access to early childhood education*

In 2009, only about 30 per cent of preschool-aged children attended a preschool program in Queensland (ECEC Queensland 2010c). The Early Childhood Education and Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreements aim to deliver universal access to 15 hours of quality early childhood education to all children in the year before full-time school by 2013.

Several initiatives are being implemented to meet these aims, including 240 extra preschools to cater to the needs of 14 000 children not currently attending approved preschool programs (ECEC Queensland 2009d), funding LDC centres to provide approved preschool programs and scholarships for teachers to upgrade qualifications (DET Queensland 2010a).

In Queensland, approved preschool programs are generally delivered by registered teachers with early childhood qualifications or 4-year university qualified EC teachers. However, the Queensland Government is offering scholarships for 3-year university qualified early childhood teachers (or holders of 3-year advanced diploma qualifications) to upgrade their qualifications to meet national requirements of 4-year university qualified teachers (COAG 2009d).

### *Staff-to-child ratios and qualification requirements*

Current Queensland staff-to-child ratios for LDC and preschools are broadly consistent with the new national standards, and only small adjustments will be required to the staff-to-child ratio for children over 24 months. Although no increase to Queensland staff-to-child ratios will be required until 2016, special mixed age staff-to-child ratio provisions apply for some LDC services to ease the adjustment (ECEC Queensland 2009c, 2009d) (table F.4).

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From 1 January 2016, the current LDC and preschools 1:6 staff-to-child ratio for children aged 25–35 months will increase to 1:5, and the current 1:12 staff-to-child ratio for children from 36 months to school age will increase to 1:11 under the NQS (ECEC Queensland 2009c, 2009d).

A special mixed age staff-to-child ratio applies to Queensland services that were licensed prior to 1 January 2011. Services that can justify the continued use of a ratio of 1:5 for children 15–36 months will be eligible to maintain this ratio until 31 December 2017, after which time the NQS will apply. Other jurisdictions will be required to apply a ratio of 1:4 from 1 January 2012 (COAG 2010).

Current legislation requires staff in LDC and preschool services to hold or be working towards a minimum of a certificate III qualification. Directors must have (or be working towards) a relevant 3-year qualification or higher. Group leaders are required to have (or be working towards) a relevant diploma, a 2-year qualification in early childhood or children’s services studies, or a qualification for a director (Community Services Queensland 2009d; ECEC Queensland 2009c, 2009d). This is similar to the NQS, which will require 50 per cent of staff to hold a diploma or above by 2014. A range of support exists to help staff gain formal qualifications required under the NQS (ECEC Queensland 2009e).

For FDC services, current Queensland staff-to-child ratios are similar to the NQS. The current ratio (1:7) does not include the FDC educator’s own school age children, whereas under the NQS the FDC educator’s own children including school age children will be counted in the ratio.

The certificate III minimum qualification requirement does not presently apply to FDC educators and will apply under the NQS from 2014. No change will be required to qualification levels of FDC coordinators (ECEC Queensland 2009e).

**Table F.4 Staff-to-child ratios**  
Queensland

<i>Service type</i>	<i>Staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Qualified staff-to-child ratio<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
LDC and preschools	0–24 months, 1:4	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All workers must hold a certificate III qualification</li> <li>• Group leaders must hold a diploma</li> <li>• Directors must have a 3-year vocational or tertiary qualification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing requirement for 50 per cent of educators to hold, or be studying towards, a diploma level qualification or above (teacher may be included)</li> </ul>
	15–36 months, 1:5	Until 1 January 2018 <sup>c</sup>		
	25–35 months, 1:6	Until 1 January 2016		
	30–35 months, 1:8	Until 1 January 2016		
	> 35 months, 1:12	Until 1 January 2016		
	Mixed age group, 1:7 <sup>d</sup>	Until 1 January 2012		
OC and limited hours care <sup>e</sup>	As above	Ongoing	As above	Ongoing
FDC <sup>f</sup>	1:7 (no more than 4 children under school age) <sup>g</sup>	Until 1 January 2014 <sup>h</sup>	..	Until 1 January 2014
OSHC <sup>i</sup>	1:15	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one worker must hold a diploma</li> <li>• For every 30 children present, 1 worker with certificate III</li> </ul>	Ongoing

<sup>a</sup> State regulations will continue to apply until NQS requirements come into force. Where State regulations require higher staff-to-child ratios or qualifications than the NQS, these will continue to apply. <sup>b</sup> Minimum qualification requirement (or studying towards). <sup>c</sup> Special transitional provision applies to Queensland services licensed before 1 January 2011 which can justify the continued use of the 1:5 ratio for this age range. <sup>d</sup> Current ratio for mixed age groups in centre-based care is 1:7 with no more than two children aged birth to one year per staff member, up to a maximum of 4 in a group. If the centre is licensed for more than 30 children, the group may not include more than 10 children aged birth to 2 years. <sup>e</sup> Occasional care and limited hours care services are outside the scope of the NQS and therefore state regulatory standards for ratios and qualifications will apply. <sup>f</sup> Under the NQS, all FDC educators must hold a certificate III qualification by 1 January 2014. <sup>g</sup> Ratio includes the educator's own children under school age, but their own school-age children not included. <sup>h</sup> Under the NQS, from 1 January 2014, a staff-to-child ratio of 1:7 will apply, with a maximum of 4 children not yet attending school, and where the ratio includes the FDC educator's own children (below and above school age). <sup>i</sup> At least one staff member who holds, or is studying towards, a diploma level qualification in a relevant area must be present at all times care is being provided or, if care is provided for more than 7 hours and 15 minutes, for at least that period of time. .. Not applicable.

Source: COAG (2009h).

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Other recent changes to the *Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005* recognise certain teaching experiences in an early childhood setting for the purpose of renewing teacher registration. In addition, recent changes to the *Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002* enable the Queensland Studies Authority to develop, approve, purchase, revise and accredit preschool guidelines (DET Queensland nda).

## Funding and provision

In 2009-10, of the 1910 childcare services operating in Queensland, about 3 per cent were managed by government, slightly less than in the preceding years. In contrast, about 61 per cent were privately managed, having increased slightly over the same period, and 35 per cent were community managed (SCRGSP 2011a).<sup>7</sup>

Of the 376 preschools operating in Queensland in 2009-10, just 8 per cent were managed by government, around 0.5 per cent privately managed, and 90 per cent community managed (SCRGSP 2011a).

In 2009-10, the Queensland Government spent more than \$96 million on children's services, where expenditure was split approximately equally between childcare and preschool services. Total expenditure was higher than 2008-09 but significantly lower than 2006-07 and previous years, due to the replacement of Queensland's preschool program with a non-compulsory full-time preparatory year from 2007 (SCRGSP 2011a, Queensland Government Library Services 2010).

However, the Queensland Government is now investing significantly in the provision of preschool services for children in the year before formal schooling (details below). Current emphasis on the funding and provision of preschool services reflects commitment to provide 15 hours of quality early childhood education to all children in the year before full-time school, as specified under the NPA ECE (COAG 2009d).

Highlights of the ECEC programs planned include:

- community preschools — more than \$40 million in support for existing preschools under the Department of Education Community Kindergarten Assistance Scheme, which will be replaced by a new funding scheme (see below).
- new preschool services — more than \$300 million over five years is planned to provide up to 240 kindergarten services by 2014, to assist meeting the national

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<sup>7</sup> Excludes services for which management type was unknown.

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universal access standard, including 108 extra kindergarten services opening by the end of 2012.

- extending the capacity of integrated early childhood services, by investing in Early Years Centres in Browns Plains, Caboolture, Cairns and North Gold Coast, and their satellite and outreach services.
- improving access to ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island families, through children and family centres being established in Cairns, Doomadgee, Ipswich, Logan, Mackay, Mareeba, Mornington Island, Mount Isa, Palm Island and Rockhampton, under a joint initiative with the Australian Government.
- expanded ECEC services — distribution of \$3.6 million to expand ECEC services in mining communities (DET Queensland 2010a).

Early learning and care centres (ELCCs) that include LDC and preschool programs will open in Cairns, Townsville and Gladstone in partnership with the Australian Government (box 15.4). In addition, by 2012, the Queensland Government will establish ten children and family centres to cater for the needs of Indigenous children from birth to eight years, funded by the Australian Government (box F.2; box 15.4) (DET Queensland 2010a).

A range of programs assist children with additional education needs to promote access and participation in ECD programs (DET Queensland ndb). Some playgroups also offer additional support for families such as Indigenous families and families from CALD groups (Community Services Queensland 2010).

### *New funding scheme*

The Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme, to be implemented from January 2010, provides funding to preschool services and, for the first time, LDC services delivering approved preschool programs. Under this scheme, services that provide approved preschool programs will receive a standard subsidy per child, and services may be eligible for remote, low SES, and/or health care card subsidies so that additional funding is directed to children and families in areas of greatest need.

The standard subsidy under the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme is provided for each child participating in a kindergarten program, and differs according to the type of service. The standard subsidy for each child attending a kindergarten service is higher than for a child attending a LDC service, as families attending LDC services may access the Australian Government CCB and CCR (box F.1).

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Eligible services must comply with a range of criteria. For example, services must be licensed (see above) and provide a preschool program for children in the year before school for at least 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year. Also, preschool programs must be delivered by either a 4-year qualified early childhood education teacher, or a Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) registered teacher with an approved early childhood qualification, or a QCT registered primary teacher who is studying towards an approved early childhood qualification.

Transitional arrangements are in place to assist existing community preschools adjust to the new scheme, although new kindergarten programs are required to meet the criteria from commencement of operation. Transitional arrangements include a guaranteed minimum level of funding, program duration, and adjustment to age of children, education program and teacher qualification requirements.

Under the new Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme, the employment conditions of staff delivering approved preschool programs are not prescribed (ECEC Queensland 2010b).

## **Workforce initiatives**

The Queensland Government has put in place a range of workforce strategies to assist staff to meet the qualification requirements included in the COAG ECEC reforms. The Government's scholarship scheme allocates more than \$1 million over two years to support eligible ECEC workers to upgrade their qualifications for registration as a teacher (DET Queensland 2010a). Other support will be provided for early childhood professionals through the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline, which is based on the national Early Years Learning Framework.

## **F.7 Early childhood education and care in Queensland: the role of local government**

In Queensland, local councils provide a range of community and other services, although generally local government organisations play a limited role in the provision of ECEC services.

### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

Local authorities are responsible for regulating activities such as land use planning, building approvals, waste disposal and regulation of air, noise and water (DIP 2010). Local authorities are also responsible for ensuring that

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centre-based services are constructed in accordance with building standards (Community Services Queensland 2009d).

## **Funding and provision**

Some local authorities operate ECEC services including LDC, OSHC and FDC. Other local authorities operate more wide ranging services, for example Longreach Regional council operates OSHC, FDC, as well as mobile child care and rural in-home services. Mobile child care provides one day of limited hours care in each of four remote townships, and rural in home services provide families in remote Queensland and the Northern Territory or in special circumstances access to a carer to work in the family home. The cost of the latter service can be offset by the Australian Government CCB (Longreach Regional Council nd).

## **F.8 Early childhood education and care in South Australia: the role of the State Government**

The ECEC sector in South Australia has been undergoing rapid change in the past few years. Unlike other jurisdictions, where privately-managed operators have been dominating ECEC services for a long time, in the South Australian market, they account for about 40 per cent of services.

The State Government manages the majority of preschools and OC, as well as sponsoring family day care. In 2009-10, it spent \$124 million on children's services. Expenditure was \$496 per child, compared with a national average of \$249 (SCRGSP 2011a).

The South Australian Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) is responsible for licensing and monitoring ECEC services, as well as providing a variety of services. The *Children's Services Act 1985* and the Children's Services (Child Care Centre) Regulations 1998 set the legislative framework for ECEC services in South Australia. The Legislation Reform Unit within DECD has been preparing the legislation required for the implementation of the NQA and the NPA ECE (DECS ndb).

## **Licensing**

There are different types of regulatory frameworks for various ECEC services. The *Children's Services Act 1985* covers LDC, FDC and babysitting agencies (table F.5).

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Licences are issued for a period of two years, and licensees must ensure the centre complies with the legislation's requirements, including requirements relating to appropriate premises and staffing standards. Service managers need to receive specific approval before being appointed.

A FDC educator is defined as a person who proposes, for monetary or other consideration, to care for not more than four young children on a non-residential basis in a family environment away from their own homes and apart from their guardians. Educators need to be approved under the legislation. The State Government sponsors most FDC schemes in South Australia (DECS 2010a).

OSHC providers are not required to hold a licence. However, OSHC services that operate on DECD sites or that are operated by a DECD school governing council must comply with detailed standards, covering staffing requirements and other areas of operations. Voluntary compliance is recommended for other service providers. Of the 331 OSHC services in South Australia, about 60 per cent are operated by DECD school governing councils, and the rest are operated at community centres or LDC centres (DECS nde). Occasional care that is operated by DECD must also comply with the department's standards (DECS nda).

Preschool education is defined in the *Children's Services Act 1985* as 'programmes for the development and education of children who have not attained the age of six years'.<sup>8</sup> Preschool programs are delivered in a variety of settings (see provision below). Stand-alone kindergartens are registered as children's services centres under the *Children's Services Act 1985*. Government-run preschools are not regulated, while preschools in non-government schools are regulated as childcare centres (DECS 2008).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In South Australia, preschools are referred to as kindergartens or child parent centres (DECS 2010a).

<sup>9</sup> Due to the regulatory framework, preschool staff working in integrated centres are employed by DECD, while the child care staff are employed by the centre's management committee (DECS ndg).

Table F.5 **Staff-to-child ratios**  
South Australia

Service type	Staff-to-child ratio	Timeframe <sup>a</sup>	Qualified staff-to-child ratio	Timeframe <sup>a</sup>
LDC	0–2 year-old, 1:5	Until 1 January 2012	0–2 year-old, 1:20	Until 1 January 2014
	> 2 year-old, 1:8 (for the first 8 children, 1:10 for additional children)	Until 1 January 2016	> 2 year-old, 1:35	
	school children, 1:15	Until 1 January 2016	school children, 1:30	
FDC	0–12 year-old, 1:7 (including no more than 4 children aged 0–6)	Until 1 January 2014	All educators must hold a Certificate III in Children's Services	
OSHC <sup>b</sup>	1:12 (for the first 12 children)		1:30	
	1:15 (for additional children)			
OC <sup>c</sup>	0-2 year-old, 1:5 > 2 year-old, 1:8 (for the first eight children) (1:10 for additional children)		The first staff member at the service must be qualified	

<sup>a</sup> State regulations will continue to apply until NQS requirements come into force. Where state regulations require higher staff-to-child ratios or qualifications than the NQS, these will continue to apply. <sup>b</sup> Standards for OSHC are only compulsory for services that operate on DECD sites or that are operated by a DECD school governing council. <sup>c</sup> Standards for OC services are only compulsory for services that are funded by DECD.

Source: COAG (2009h).

## Monitoring and enforcement

DECD conducts regular monitoring visits to licensed ECEC services and approved FDC educators. Visits are conducted at least once a year, or more often if problems are identified (SCRGSP 2011a). OSHC and OC services receive validation visits. Centres that do not comply with the legislation may lose their licence and other penalties may be imposed under the *Children's Services Act 1985*.

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## Funding and provision

DECD plays a major role in the direct provision of ECEC services, through a number of channels.

- Preschools — DECD operates 96 per cent of the 455 preschools in South Australia. In 2009-10, total expenditure on preschool provision was \$106.7 million (SCRGSP 2011a). Preschools operate as stand-alone services, as school-based preschools or as part of integrated centres (see below). The State Government also operates a preschool dedicated to children with disabilities, as well as supporting their participation in mainstream preschools (DECS ndf).
- FDC — DECD sponsors 12 FDC schemes, which include 822 educators. This represents the bulk of FDC schemes in the State.
- OC — in communities where no other care is available, DECD operates OC through preschools. In 2010, there were 86 preschools providing OC in South Australia.
- Rural care and integrated centres — LDC is provided at 13 preschools in rural communities. There are also 14 rural integrated centres that offer ECEC services in a purpose built facility. Some rural locations offer playcentres as an alternative to preschool for children up to five years of age.
- Children's centres for early childhood development and parenting — as part of its early childhood strategy, the State Government has established 13 integrated children's centres, and plans to build another 10 by 2014. Centres offer ECEC, child health, family support and other services in one location. In addition to teachers and educators, the centres employ community development coordinators, family support services coordinators and allied health professionals. Three centres are designated for Indigenous children and their families (DECS 2010a).

## Workforce initiatives

In addition to the direct provision of services, the State Government supports the ECEC sector in a variety of ways. DECD operates the Early Learning and Curriculum unit, which provides professional development programs and resources for teachers and educators. Specific programs are available to support Indigenous and bilingual children (DECS ndc). The State Government has also supported initiatives to enhance the skills of the ECEC workforce (DFEEST 2005).

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## **F.9 Early childhood education and care in South Australia: the role of local government**

Local councils play a limited role within ECEC. While councils may support ECEC services through their work in community services, they tend not to be involved in the direct provision or regulation of ECEC services.

## **F.10 Early childhood education and care in Western Australia: the role of the State Government**

In Western Australia, the Minister for Education has responsibility for the National Early Childhood Agenda. The Office for Early Childhood Development and Learning has been established under the Department of Education (DfC Western Australia 2009b).

The *Child Care Services Act 2007* and the Child Care Services Regulations 2007, as well as other regulations for specific forms of ECEC, provide the legislative framework for ECEC services in Western Australia. The related regulations include:

- Child Care Services (Child Care) Regulations 2006
- Child Care Services (Family Day Care) Regulations 2006
- Child Care Services (Outside School Hours Care) Regulations 2006
- Child Care Services (Outside School Hours Family Day Care) Regulations 2006
- Rural Family Care (Child Care Services) Regulations 2010.

The *Child Care Services Act 2007* contains the licence provisions for ECEC services, and the Regulations provide further details on the requirements.

The Department for Communities (DfC) is responsible for administering the Act and related regulations (DfC Western Australia 2009a). DfC is responsible for regulating OSHC. OSHC guidelines were recently developed by the Department of Education for schools that wish to provide OSHC services.

ECEC services must also fulfil other requirements such as approval from the Department of Planning to operate the service from the proposed location, building requirements set out in the Building Code of Australia, local government laws, and occupational, health and safety requirements (DfC Western Australia nda).

The Department of Education is responsible for running public preschools, and the majority of preschools are co-located with primary schools. Western Australian

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preschools are governed by the *School Education Act 1999* and the *School Education Regulations 2000*. Program content and quality is regulated under additional regulations (COAG 2009h).

In 2009-10, more than 30 000 children were enrolled in preschool services in Western Australia in the year before full time schooling, and in 2009 over 95 per cent of all eligible children were enrolled in a preschool program (SCRGSP 2011a; DoE Western Australia nda). As part of the rollout of universal access standards, from 2010 some preschool programs will increase from 11 hours to 15 hours per week (DoE Western Australia ndb). By 2013, all government and non-government preschools will provide programs of 15 hours per week, for 40 weeks a year.

Indigenous children may be well represented in preschool enrolments, but attendance rates for Indigenous children are poorer than for non-Indigenous children, suggesting Indigenous children may be benefiting less than other children from preschool programs (SCRGSP 2011a).

## **Licensing**

In Western Australia, LDC centres, OSHC and FDC services are required to be licensed. Children's services not required to be licensed under Western Australian regulations are nannies and babysitters who provide care for children in their own home. However, they are required to have a current Working with Children Card (DfC Western Australia 2010a). Crèche services that operate in venues such as shopping centres and gyms are regulated through minimum regulatory requirements.

The regulations set out minimum standards including with respect to the suitability of the person who will be looking after the children, child safety, equipment and toys, programs and activities for children, administrative records, information to parents, and staffing qualifications and ratios (DfC Western Australia ndb).

The licensee may employ a supervising officer who is responsible for the day-to-day supervision and control of the service. The supervising officer is also assessed according to their suitability, which includes criminal record and Working with Children checks. A nominated supervising officer cannot operate in the same capacity for a different service operating at the same time (DfC Western Australia nda). As a minimum, the licence applicant is required to have a first aid qualification (DfC Western Australia ndb).

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As part of the suitability of licence process, managerial officers are subject to criminal record and Working with Children checks, and the financial background of licence applicants is assessed. Other checks relate to the service and building including children's program and play equipment, and staffing qualifications and ratios. Licences are not transferable (DfC Western Australia nda).

### *Staff ratios*

Staff-to-child ratios depend on the age of the children being cared for, and current Western Australian staff-to-child ratios for LDC centres are broadly consistent with the NQS (table F.6).

The current staff-to-child ratio of 1:10 for 3-year-old children and younger will continue to apply in Western Australia under the NQS, although other jurisdictions will be required to meet a staff-to-child ratio of 1:11 from 1 January 2016 (COAG 2010; DfC Western Australia ndc).

Under Western Australian regulations, FDC services can care for up to seven children under the age of 13 years (including the educator's own children), which is in line with the NQS for these services. The ratio for children under preschool age will change to 1:4 under the NQS.

In addition, under the NQS, FDC educators will no longer be individually licensed, rather they will have to become members of a FDC scheme, with the scheme acting as a third party regulator.

In Western Australian preschools, the current staff-to-child ratio is 2:20 (one teacher and one assistant per 20 children).

### *Staff qualifications*

In Western Australia, current regulations require a range of children's services qualifications to support staff. For example, current regulations for LDC require a staff member occupying a qualified position caring for children aged 0–2 years to hold a tertiary degree or diploma in early childhood care, a 2-year certificate in children's services studies, a diploma or associate diploma in children's services, or mothercraft nurse qualifications (DfC Western Australia ndc).

**Table F.6 Staff-to-child ratios**  
Western Australia

<i>Service type</i>	<i>Staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Qualified staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>a</sup></i>
LDC	0–2 years, 1:4	Ongoing <sup>b</sup>	0–2 years, 1:12	Until 1 January 2014 <sup>b</sup>
	2–3 years, 1:5	Ongoing <sup>b</sup>	2–3 years, 1:15	Until 1 January 2016 <sup>b</sup>
	> 3 years, 1:10 <sup>c</sup>	Ongoing <sup>c</sup>	> 3 years, 1:30	Until 1 January 2016 <sup>b</sup>
Preschool	2:20		1:20 <sup>d</sup>	
FDC	0–6 years, 1:5			
	0–12 years, 1:7			
OSHC	1:10		1:40	
OC	as per LDC		as per LDC	

<sup>a</sup> State regulations will continue to apply until NQS requirements come into force. Where state regulations require higher staff-to-child ratios or qualifications than the NQS, these will continue to apply. <sup>b</sup> Staff-to-child ratios and qualifications are already aligned with those to be implemented under the NQS. <sup>c</sup> Unlike other jurisdictions where 1:11 applies, under the NQS a ratio of 1:10 will apply from 1 January 2016 for Western Australia. <sup>d</sup> One teacher and one assistant per 20 children. Assistants are not required to be qualified.

Sources: COAG (2009h); DfC Western Australia (ndc).

Unlike some other jurisdictions, Western Australian regulations do not currently require minimum level qualifications for general LDC staff, although Certificate III in Children's Services is encouraged. However, minimum certificate III qualifications are recommended in a recent review and may be implemented before the introduction of the NQS by 1 January 2014.

FDC educators are currently required to hold a first aid qualification. As with LDC staff, under the NQS, FDC educators will be required to have a minimum certificate III qualification by 1 January 2014.

### *Preschools*

Schools, and therefore preschools are not typically licensed, although some private preschools are licensed as childcare services (COAG 2009h).

All preschool teachers in Western Australia have been required to hold a minimum 4-year tertiary qualification since 2004, and must be members of the Western Australian College of Teaching (WACOT) (COAG 2009h). In contrast, there are currently no qualification requirements for ECEC education assistants (about 17 per cent have Certificate III or IV in Children's Services qualifications), and they

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are not required to have WACOT registration (Western Australian Department of Education, sub. 44). Education assistants will be required to have minimum qualification of Certificate III in Children's Services (or be working towards) under the NQS.

## **Monitoring and enforcement**

The DfC is responsible for the administration of the *Child Care Services Act 2007* and relevant regulations. The Child Care Licensing and Standards Unit assesses and processes licence applications, and provides information and support to ECEC services to help them comply. The DfC also monitors compliance with State regulations, and responds to concerns and complaints of non-compliance (DfC Western Australia 2009a).

## **Funding and provision**

In 2009-10, of the 1500 licensed and registered childcare services operating in Western Australia, about 3 per cent were managed by government, less than in the preceding year. In contrast, more than 75 per cent were privately managed, having increased slightly over the same period, and almost 20 per cent were community-managed.

At that time, of the total 1500 services, there were more than 700 FDC educators licensed individually in Western Australia, more than 500 centre-based services, and around 200 OSHC services. Those services catered to around 64 000 children in Western Australia (SCRGSP 2011a).

FDC services are supported by 17 schemes (coordination units). Each FDC educator undertakes a comprehensive assessment to obtain scheme membership. Each educator must be licensed with the DfC Child Care Licensing and Standards Unit (Family Day Care WA 2011).

All 850 preschools operating in Western Australia are managed by government (SCRGSP 2011a). More than 90 per cent of Western Australian children attend preschool (DET Western Australia 2010). Under universal access policies, preschool hours will increase from 11 hours to 15 hours per week. In preparation for the rollout, some preschool services began increasing hours in 2010 (DoE Western Australia nda). Although attendance rates are high, the introduction of 15 hours per week of preschool services under the NPA ECE will affect workforce demand, along with the minimum qualification requirement of Certificate III in Children's Services for all ECEC staff.

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In 2009-10, the Western Australian Government spent more than \$187 million on children's services, with less than \$10 million spent on childcare services, and more than \$178 million on preschool services (SCRGSP 2011a). Specific government preschool initiatives for Indigenous children include:

- Indigenous preschools — operate in 28 schools and provide early learning programs for Indigenous children aged 3–4 years
- Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers — provide help to teachers to implement culturally appropriate early childhood programs (DoE Western Australia 2010c)
- Statewide Speech and Language Service — provides each identified school leader with professional learning and ongoing consultation, mentoring and coaching (DoE Western Australia 2010a)
- Best Start — prepares Indigenous under 5-year-old children for school and provides support for parents, carers and extended families in their parenting role (DfC Western Australia 2009b). Fourteen Best Start programs operate across Western Australia, of which ten are State funded and three new Best Start programs were started in 2008-09 under the NPA ECE. The programs operate across a number of different sites.

In addition, under its Aboriginal Early Childhood Initiative Leadership Trial, DoE Western Australia (through the Aboriginal Education unit) has committed funding to 23 schools for Key Speech and Language Leaders (DoE Western Australia 2010a).

## **Workforce initiatives**

In preparation for the NQS, the State Government has in place a number of initiatives to uplift qualifications in the ECEC sector to meet pending demand. Although Western Australia, unlike other states, does not routinely provide preschool services in LDC settings, by 1 January 2014 under the NQS, an early childhood teacher will need to be in attendance when LDC services are being provided (COAG 2009h).

Present challenges relating to recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff to rural and remote (and very remote) areas will be increased if quality standards are to apply to ECEC services for Indigenous children. In some areas in particular, such as the Pilbara and Kimberley regions, demand is high and housing costs can be prohibitive (chapter 9).

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## **F.11 Early childhood education and care in Western Australia: The role of local government**

Although some local governments provide ECEC services, local councils play a limited role within the ECEC sector (WALGA 2007). ECEC services need to obtain relevant building approval from their local government (Town of Kwinana nd).

## **F.12 Early childhood education and care in Tasmania: The role of the State Government**

In Tasmania, the State Government plays a key role in the ECEC sector, across regulation, funding and provision. It regulates childcare services, and provides the bulk of preschool services via public schools and other programs. It also provides funding in other areas such as training for ECEC staff and subsidising preschool services in the non-government school sector.

In 2005, the State Government developed the ‘Whole of Government Policy Framework for the Early Years’, to inform and guide policies in the sector (IPCC 2005). A number of reforms and initiatives aim to promote coordination and cooperation between the different arms of government (such as the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services) to improve service delivery.

In 2009-10, the Tasmanian Government spent over \$28 million on ECEC, an increase of 11 per cent since 2005-06. Average expenditure per child was \$342, compared with a national average of \$249, and is spent mainly on preschool services.

In 2010, nearly 38 per cent of Tasmanian children up to five years of age attended Australian Government approved childcare services (compared with a national average attendance rate of 36 per cent). Over half of the State’s childcare services were community-managed, 33 per cent were privately managed and 15.4 per cent were managed by government (SCRGSP 2011a).

### **Licensing**

The Child Care Unit (CCU) at the Department of Education is responsible for administering the *Child Care Act 2001* (Tas). The Act defines childcare as provision of care, for a fee or other material benefit, to a child by a person other than the child’s parent or a member of the child’s extended family. Licences are generally

valid for two years and are issued to services that comply with the legislation's standards (table F.7).

Licences include the following categories:

- approved registration body licences, which cover FDC schemes and in-home care
- centre-based childcare licences, which apply to LDC, OSHC and OC
- home-based childcare licences, for individual providers of FDC.

The standards also allow unqualified staff to be employed in positions that require formal qualifications if they are studying for a qualification or are participating in an approved mentorship program.

**Table F.7 Staff-to-child ratios**  
Tasmania

<i>Service type</i>	<i>Staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Qualified staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>a</sup></i>
LDC	0–3 years, 1:5	Until 1 January 2012	0–3 years, 1:10 <sup>b, c</sup>	Until 1 January 2014
	> 3 years, 1:10	Until 1 January 2016	> 3 years, 1:20 <sup>b, c</sup>	Until 1 January 2016
FDC	1:7 (no more than four children < 5-year-old for a standard registration; no more than five children < 5-year-old for an extended registration)	Until 1 January 2014	All educators with an extended registration require certificate III or above. All persons in charge (e.g. coordinators) must hold an approved qualification <sup>c</sup> .	
OSHC	1:15		..	
OC	0–3 years, 1:5		0–3 years, 1:10 <sup>b, c</sup>	

<sup>a</sup> State regulations will continue to apply until NQS requirements come into force. Where State regulations require higher staff-to-child ratios or qualifications than the NQS, these will continue to apply. <sup>b</sup> The ratio is 1 qualified staff member to 15 children for combinations of children between birth and 5-years, with no more than five children younger than 3-years. <sup>c</sup> Approved qualifications include a minimum of a 2-year full-time or equivalent accredited post-secondary education or tertiary qualification in early childhood; or, if appropriate, in school-aged care or recreation. .. Not applicable.

Source: Child Care Act 2001 (Tas).

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## Monitoring and enforcement

The *Child Care Act 2001* includes provisions for inspections of ECEC services. Each service receives an average of four inspections per year, the majority of which are scheduled in advance (except when complaints are made and unannounced visits are conducted). Where problems are found, services are visited more frequently (SCRGSP 2011a).

The Act also includes provisions for suspension or cancellation of licences, as well as penalties for services that do not comply with legal requirements or the conditions of their licence. In cases where services are deemed unsafe or unsuitable, children can be removed from a service by a prescribed officer under the *Child Care Act 2001*.

## Funding and provision

In Tasmania, preschool services represent the State Government's largest involvement in the ECEC sector. In 2009-10, the State Government spent \$26.5 million on preschool services. This includes teacher salaries, since all government preschools have teachers employed by the State Government, and subsidies to non-government schools that provide preschool services.

Preschool services are provided via all primary schools throughout Tasmania. Preschool programs are included in the national curriculum, and all eligible 4- and 5-year-olds are entitled to 10 hours of preschool a week. In 2009-10, the Government managed over 72 per cent of preschools in the State, and employed preschool teachers. Other services were provided through independent and catholic primary schools and LDC centres registered by the Schools Registration Board.

Some government schools across the state are being developed as ECD hubs, offering child care, family support and early education, particularly in vulnerable communities. Early education programs include Launching into Learning (\$12.6 million over four years), an initiative that supports about 120 primary schools across the State that deliver a wide variety of programs for children from birth to 4-years of age and their parents. These can include playgroups, parent groups and other community activities.

In 2007, the Government also launched Making Connections, a guide that aims to encourage primary schools to forge links with LDC centres and support OSHC on school premises. In 2009-10, 20 schools provided LDC services, and 68 schools provided OSHC (DoE Tasmania 2010).

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The extent of the State Government's involvement in the provision of ECEC services is set to increase further as it opens new Children and Family Centres (CFC). Eleven centres are in various stages of development — the first began operating in early 2011 and six more will open by the end of the year.

The CFCs are designed for children from birth to 5 years of age and their families. They will offer a variety of integrated services that will be tailored to each community and can include parenting programs, child and family health services, and adult education and training. Early childhood education and care may be co-located in the centres, but will not be provided by the Government. The Department of Education will be the lead agency responsible for the CFCs (DoE Tasmania ndc).

The State Government also provides funding for a small number of childcare services, such as OC services in rural areas as well as providing specific funding for programs and services for children with additional needs.

### **Workforce initiatives**

The Tasmanian Government funds a number of scholarships, mentorships and skills-training related programs to support the ECEC workforce (DoE Tasmania 2010).

## **F.13 Early childhood education and care in Tasmania: the role of local government**

### **Licensing**

Local councils in Tasmania oversee planning regulations that affect ECEC services. This may include, for example, planning and building approvals, food safety, parking requirements, and change of use of a building (DoE Tasmania ndb).

### **Monitoring and enforcement**

Local government has limited activities in this area. Councils that coordinate FDC schemes monitor the quality of services provided as part of their licensing conditions.

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## Funding and provision

Councils provide limited funding to the ECEC sector. Funding commitments are more substantial for councils that provide ECEC services. Some councils operate LDC centres and FDC schemes (for example, Derwent Valley Council operates both services, as well as a playgroup; Kingborough Council runs a FDC scheme; Burnie City Council operates LDC and OSHC services).

### F.14 Early childhood education and care in the Northern Territory: the role of the Territory Government

The *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* and the Care and Protection of Children (Children's Services) Regulations 2009 provide the legislative framework for children's services in the Northern Territory. These will be in place until replaced by the Education and Care National Law and Regulations in 2012.

The new Act supersedes the *Community Welfare Act 1983* and Community Welfare (Child Care) Regulations 1987, and commenced in June 2009. It covers a larger number of ECEC services including FDC and OSHC (DET NT 2010e). However, these arrangements do not commence until 2012. Services that were licensed under the old legislation continue to operate under those requirements until their licence expires (DET NT ndb).

The current legislation sets out minimum standards for children's services in the Northern Territory. The Act sets out provision for failure to comply, cancellation of licence and inspection of premises, and penalties in the case of breaches. The Regulations include a range of requirements such as space and child numbers and information including the granting and cancellation of licences (DET NT 2009b).

The Department of Education and Training (DET) is responsible for implementing the childcare component of the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*. Preschools (often co-located with primary schools) are not included under this legislative framework and are instead required to operate under the requirements of the *Education Act* (COAG 2009h). The Northern Territory Government has responsibility for the functions of planning (development assessment and land use planning), building regulation and environmental health (LGANT nd).

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## Licensing

Children's services are defined as those that provide care for children less than 13 years of age, in a place other than the child's home for all or part of the day. Excluded are care of a child by family members or private arrangements such as babysitting, and services that are part of an education program provided by a school. Depending on the nature of and the length of time the service is provided, it will either need to be licensed or registered. LDC centres and preschools for 3-year-olds need to be licensed. FDC coordination units are required to be licensed by 1 January 2012, and OSHC by 31 December 2013 (DET NT 2010e).

Licensed children's services are required to notify DET of building alterations, major accidents or incidents, and complaints against the service that may involve a breach of legislation (DET NT 2009d).

A licence to operate a children's service is issued for up to three years. Applicants are appraised in terms of their suitability, the premises provided, and the proposed policies and procedures. As part of the licensing process, DET will assess the probity of the applicant.

Individual FDC services, or short-term care (such as crèches in clubs), or one-off events (such as conferences), are required to be registered from 31 December 2011. To register a service, applicants will need to complete the required paperwork, including providing contact and location details, and commit to comply with the core conditions. Registration is renewed annually (DET NT 2010e).

### *Staff ratios*

Staff-to-child ratios depend on the age of the children being cared for, and current Northern Territory staff-to-child ratios for ECEC services are broadly consistent with those prescribed in the NQS.

However, some changes will be required. For example, for children aged 0–23 months, the current staff-to-child ratio of 1:5 will need to be increased to 1:4 when the NQS takes effect in January 2012. Current regulations for children older than 23 months will not require adjustment (table F.8).

### *Staff qualifications*

Staff in LDC, FDC and OSHC services, and preschools for 3-year-olds, are recommended, but not required, to have a Certificate III in Children's Services. Half of the staff are required to have a minimum of a 2-year children's services or early

childhood qualification. As part of the transitional arrangements, OSHC services have until 31 December 2013 to comply (DET NT 2010g).

In the Northern Territory, there must be at least 12 enrolled children in a preschool for a preschool teacher to be allocated. There is no requirement for a preschool teacher to have a 4-year university early childhood education degree, though they have to hold a teaching qualification recognised by the Northern Territory Teacher's Registration Board. Northern Territory regulations do not require qualified teachers to be employed in LDC settings.

**Table F.8 Staff-to-child ratios**  
Northern Territory

<i>Service type</i>	<i>Staff-to-child ratio<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Qualified staff-to-child ratio<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>b</sup></i>
LDC and preschool	0–23 months, 1:5 <sup>c</sup>	Until 1 January 2012	0–23 months, 1:10	Until 1 January 2014
	24–35 months, 1:5 <sup>c</sup>	Ongoing <sup>d</sup>	24–35 months, 1:10	Ongoing <sup>d</sup>
	> 35 months, 1:11 <sup>e</sup>	Ongoing <sup>d</sup>	> 35 months, 1:22 <sup>e</sup>	Ongoing <sup>d</sup>
FDC	..	Until 1 January 2014 <sup>f</sup>	.. <sup>g</sup>	Ongoing
OSHC	1:15 <sup>h</sup>	Ongoing	..	Ongoing
OC	As per LDC	Until 1 January 2012	As above	Until 1 January 2012

<sup>a</sup> Under the NQS, qualified staff are defined as those that have (or are actively working towards) a diploma level ECEC qualification or above (the teacher may be included in the qualified staff-to-child ratio). <sup>b</sup> State regulations will continue to apply until NQS requirements come into force. Where State regulations require higher staff-to-child ratios or qualifications than the NQS, these will continue to apply. <sup>c</sup> At least two staff to be in attendance at all times, one of whom must be qualified (diploma or above), with any size group. <sup>d</sup> Staff-to-child ratios are already aligned with those to be implemented under the NQS. <sup>e</sup> For preschools, a teacher and an assistant teacher are required to be present at all times. <sup>f</sup> Under the NQS, all FDC educators must hold a certificate III qualification by 1 January 2014. <sup>g</sup> Under the NQS, from 1 January 2014, a staff-to-child ratio of 1:7 will apply, with a maximum of four children not yet attending school, and where the ratio includes the educator's own children (below and above school age). <sup>h</sup> OSHC services have until 31 December 2013 to comply. However, with the introduction of the NQS, this will be brought forward to 1 January 2012. .. Not applicable.

Sources: COAG (2009h, 2010); DET NT (2010g).

### *Remote services*

Services in remote locations are not exempt from the children's services regulations if they meet the definition. However, many services in remote areas do not meet current licensing standards. Some services that do not meet the requirements are eligible to enter into an Action Plan Agreement outlining arrangements and timeframes to fulfil licensing standards while it continues to operate (DET NT 2010f).

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## Monitoring and enforcement

DET is responsible for monitoring and enforcement of childcare legislation through its Children's Services Unit. It regularly inspects licensed children's services to ensure they meet licensing requirements, and provides support and advice on compliance. DET also investigates complaints about licensed children's services and allegations that a service may be operating without a licence (DET NT 2009a).

In addition, the Northern Territory Government is responsible for ensuring ECEC services comply with other regulations, such as planning and building regulations.

## Funding and provision

In 2008-09, of the 80 licensed childcare services operating in the Northern Territory, none were managed by the Government.<sup>10</sup> About 30 per cent were privately-managed, and 70 per cent community-managed. There are an estimated 9000 childcare places in the Northern Territory across more than 180 services (DET NT 2010c). Of the 116 preschools operating in the Northern Territory<sup>11</sup>, more than 95 per cent were managed by government, and less than 5 per cent privately-managed. None were community-run.

In 2008-09, the Northern Territory Government spent almost \$35 million on children's services. Less than \$5 million was spent on ECEC services, and most of those funds were spent on preschools (\$30 million) (SCRGSP 2011a).

ECEC initiatives funded by the Government include:

- Northern Territory Child Care Subsidy — a subsidy introduced in 1983 to assist operators of licensed LDC centres to contain the cost of care, available for all licensed for-profit and not-for-profit LDC centres (DET NT 2009c)
- nutrition education — to support ECEC facilities to deliver nutrition education and provision of meals to children from January 2010 (DHF NT 2010).

The Government also funds the Children's Services Information System — a new data management system that assists with licensing administration processes and streamlining grants and funding payments to eligible licensed services (DET NT 2010h).

The Northern Territory Government is the primary contributor of funding to 'sessional' preschool programs. Preschool education is provided for 12.5 hours per

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<sup>10</sup> Licensed centre-based LDC services only.

<sup>11</sup> Includes Government and Catholic Remote Indigenous school preschools only.

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week for 4-year-old children in the year before school, and for some 3-year-old children with identified needs and Indigenous children in remote areas.

Preschools are generally attached to primary schools and open during school hours. Early Learning Centres are generally funded and licensed as LDC centres and operate integrated care and education programs from a school setting (Elliott, Fasoli and Nutton 2009).

The Northern Territory Government provides a range of services for Indigenous communities including through its Families as First Teachers — Indigenous Parenting Support Services Program. The early learning component builds family knowledge of learning through active engagement with ECE programs (DET NT 2010c, 2011b).

Northern Territory Government funding of children's services is complemented by a range of funding by the Australian Government.

- Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) — providing LDC, playgroups and other programs, and other non-mainstream services.
- Other non-mainstream services — generally delivered in rural and remote areas that include flexible services such as mobile and on-farm care services, Indigenous playgroups, OSHC, enrichment programs, Jobs, Education and Training (JET) crèches, and Innovative Child Care Service Hubs (Elliott, Fasoli and Nutton 2009).
- Pilot programs — in 2008-09, under the NPA ECE, several pilot programs were established to provide 15 hours of education in eight urban preschools and several remote areas (DET NT 2010c).
- Mobile preschools — where each mobile preschool has a qualified teacher who travels to several remote towns to assist local communities to deliver preschool activities (DET NT 2008).

In addition, DET provide early childhood intervention services for infants to 6-year-old children with developmental delay (or potential giftedness), through assistance to families, carers and teachers (DET 2010g). They also provide professional learning for EC teachers through the ESL for Indigenous Language Speaking Students program, including 35 additional ECE teachers to support the teaching of spoken English (DET NT 2010c).

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## **Workforce initiatives**

DET NT offers scholarships for individuals to upgrade qualifications to a 4-year university degree with an EC specialisation, although recently these have been delayed (DET NT 2010h). It also supports the workforce through the NT Early Years Framework, and Strong Beginnings — a guide to quality practice for staff working in children’s services (DET NT 2009e).

## **F.15 Early childhood education and care in the Northern Territory: the role of local government**

### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

Local government in the Northern Territory does not have responsibility for the functions of planning (development assessment and land use planning), building regulation and environmental health. The Northern Territory Government is responsible for those functions (LGANT nd). However, where children’s services apply for planning approval, the Northern Territory Government can invite the relevant local government to provide comment.

### **Funding and provision**

Few local councils provide ECEC-related services. One example is the Central Desert Shire Council, which has responsibility for early childhood facilities. Currently there are two LDC facilities and three crèche facilities in the council’s area. The council provides training support to 14 local ECEC staff to obtain a Certificate III in Children’s Services (Central Desert Shire 2010). Darwin City Council sponsors seven ECEC centres via the provision and maintenance of buildings (Darwin City Council, sub. 47).

## **F.16 Early childhood education and care: the role of the ACT Government**

The following discussion describes the role of the ACT Government within the ECD sector. Due to the unique governance structure in the ACT, the legislative assembly acts as both a state and local government (Legislative Assembly for the ACT nd).

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The ACT Government's ECD policies are guided by its Children's Plan, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of children, provide quality education to all children, and support parents and communities (ACT Government 2004).

In 2009-10, the ACT Government spent \$27.7 million on ECEC services — \$22.8 million was spent on the provision of preschool services, which is provided through public schools. This equates to \$489 per child, compared with the national average of \$249 per child (SCRGSP 2011a).

## Licensing

The *Children and Young People Act 2008* includes licensing, monitoring and enforcement provisions for ECEC services. Adjunct care (for example, in gyms), informal care by relatives and playgroups are exempt from the Act's requirements.

Licensing of ECEC services is administered by the Children's Policy and Regulation Unit (CPRU), a section of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support within the Community Services Directorate.<sup>12</sup>

Licences are granted for a period of up to three years. Licensed services must comply with the ACT Childcare Services Standards 2009, which detail operating procedures, programming, planning, and staffing and qualification requirements (table F.9) (DHCS 2009a).

The *Children and Young People Act 2008* defines a childcare centre as a service that provides care in specific premises to at least five children under school age, or eight children, if no more than four of them are not yet attending school. Under the Act, childcare centres include LDC, OSHC, playschools and independent preschools.

The majority of preschools are integrated into public schools and regulated under the *Education Act 2004*. Independent preschools are regulated by the Community Services Directorate, and covered by the childcare standards. Playschools are community-managed educational programs for 3-year-old children (unlike preschools, that offer one year of education for 4-year-olds). They are also regulated under the childcare standards (DHCS 2009a).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In March 2011, the ACT Government decided to restructure its departments into a single public service agency, comprising nine directorates. As a result, the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services became the Community Services Directorate (ACT Government 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Playschools must have a minimum of one staff member for every ten children attending, and a qualified team leader (holding a Diploma of Children's Services or a degree in early childhood

**Table F.9 Staff-to-child ratios**  
Australian Capital Territory

<i>Service type</i>	<i>Staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Qualified staff-to-child ratio</i>	<i>Timeframe<sup>a</sup></i>
LDC	0–3 year-old, 1:5  > 3 year-old, 1:11  Group sizes cannot exceed: • 0–2 year-old, 15 children • 2–3 year-old, 20 children • 3–5 year-old, 33 children	Until 1 January 2012  Until 1 January 2012  Until 1 January 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One in two contact staff must be qualified</li> <li>• Each group of children must have a designated team leader who holds (or is working towards) a tertiary qualification in early childhood education</li> <li>• Director must hold a tertiary qualification in early childhood or a Graduate Certificate in Childcare Management</li> </ul>	Until 1 January 2014
FDC	0–12 year-old, 1:7 (no more than four children under school age)	Until 1 January 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One staff member must hold a Diploma in Children's Services or a university degree in early childhood education, for every three coordinators at each FDC scheme</li> </ul>	Until 1 January 2012
OSHC	School-age, 1:11 (1:8 for children attending a holiday camp)		School-age, 1:33 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All qualified staff must hold (or be working towards) a tertiary qualification in education or other relevant field</li> </ul>	
OC	..		..	

<sup>a</sup> ACT regulations will continue to apply until NQS requirements come into force. Where ACT regulations require higher staff-to-child ratios or qualifications than the NQS, these will continue to apply. .. Not applicable.

Source: COAG (2009h).

education) for each group of up to 20 children. Independent preschools need two staff members, one of whom must be qualified, if up to 25 children are attending. Where 26 – 33 children attend, there must be three staff members, at least two of which with qualifications — one with a degree and another with a minimum qualification of Certificate III in Children's Services. Independent preschools may have up to 33 children (DHCS 2009a).

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## Monitoring and enforcement

The CPRU monitors licensed children's services, and has the authority to take action against services that do not comply with the legislation. This can include penalties, suspension and cancellation of licences and the removal of children from a service.

The CPRU conducts three to four visits to each licensed service every year. It prepares an annual compliance report for every service and notifies parents of confirmed issues of non-compliance (DHCS 2009b).

## Funding and provision

The ACT Government operates 74 preschool units through the Education and Training Directorate (ETD) (formerly the Department of Education and Training).<sup>14</sup> Since 2008, all public preschools have been combined into primary schools. Most offer 12 hours of early childhood education to 4-year-old children. The implementation of the NPA ECE has begun in 16 public schools with the delivery of 15 hours of preschool (DET ACT ndb).

Since 2009, the ETD has been operating five early childhood schools, offering integrated education and care for 0–8 year-old children. The schools offer a variety of services, including child care (outsourced to an external provider), preschool, formal schooling through kindergarten and years 1 and 2, community programs for young children and their families, counselling and family support (DET ACT 2008).

The ETD also provides the Koori Preschool Program, an early childhood education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 3–5 year-old children, through five public schools. The program provides 9 hours of early childhood education per week. Younger Indigenous children can also attend but must be accompanied by a parent or adult caregiver. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 3-year-old children can also attend their local preschool for 6 hours per week in second semester through the Early Childhood Education Early Entry Program (ACT Government, sub. DR338).

Children with additional needs can access services through the early intervention program managed by the ETD. Services range from supported playgroups for toddlers, dedicated preschool sessions, autism and language intervention units and support for teachers for children in preschool and school (DET ACT nda).

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<sup>14</sup> In March 2011, the Department of Education and Training became the Education and Training Directorate (ACT Government 2011).

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Within the ECEC sector, about \$2.2 million is spent on the provision of OC services and support the inclusion of children with additional needs. Services are provided by a number of community organisations (DHCS 2010a).

### **Workforce initiatives**

As part of its preparation for the NQS implementation, the ACT Government has implemented a range of initiatives for ECEC staff to gain or upgrade their qualifications (DHCS 2011). The Government is utilising a range of fully funded strategies to upgrade teacher and preschool assistant qualifications in ACT public schools.

The CPRU funds and provides training and support services for ECEC services and their staff (DHCS 2010b). Other branches of government are involved in ECEC training programs. For example, the Canberra YWCA offers specific training for staff from CALD backgrounds, funded by the Government's Strategic Priorities Program (CSWS 2008).

## **F.17 Child health services: the role of the Australian Government**

### **Licensing**

The child health workforce is not regulated by specific Commonwealth legislation. Nurses and allied health professionals working in the child health area are subject to the same registration and licensing provisions as the rest of their profession, regardless of their place of work.

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia has been operating as part of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) since 2009. It is the national registration body for nurses and midwives, as well as the accreditation body for education providers offering nursing and midwifery courses. The board replaces the state registration boards, and transitional arrangements have been put in place for the implementation of the new registration system. Under the new system, child and family health nurses no longer have a specific endorsement (AHPRA 2010), although practising may require further training in some states (see Victoria).

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## Monitoring and enforcement

AHPRA enforces the standards for nursing and midwifery registration and investigates complaints from the public (AHPRA nd).

## Funding and provision

The Australian Government sets the priorities for child health programs as part of its public health policies, and provides funding to a range of initiatives. However, unlike the ECEC sector, the Australian Government contributes the smaller part of funding in this area — for example, Australian Government funding for community health (which includes child health) was \$729 million while the state and territory governments contributed \$4615 million in 2008-09 (AIHW 2010a).<sup>15</sup>

There are numerous examples of major child health initiatives receiving support from the Australian Government.

- Preventive Health — The National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health was approved by COAG in 2008, and contains provisions for over \$870 million in funding. The largest funding allocation is for programs focusing on child health. The NPA provides \$325.5 million over four years to 2014-15 for state and territory governments to put in place programs aiming to increase physical activity and improve nutrition in LDC centres, preschools, schools and within families (DoHA nda).
- Immunisation — is administered through the Immunise Australia Program and the Office of Health Protection. The national immunisation program, which offers vaccines to children as well as adults, is a part of the National Partnership Agreement on Essential Vaccines. Under the agreement, the Australian Government undertakes the responsibility to purchase all vaccines (DoHA 2010d).
- Maternity Immunisation Allowance — is paid to parents who have their children fully immunised. In 2009-10, 270 000 families received the allowance, at a total cost to the Government of \$34.9 million (FaHCSIA 2010e). To receive the CCB, parents must show their child is fully immunised (for more on the CCB, see payments to parents and guardians).

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<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the Australian Government contributes the majority of total health expenditure each year, accounting for 62 per cent in 2008-09. This is due to its substantial contribution to public hospitals, medical services and medications (AIHW 2010a).

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- Healthy Kids Check — 4-year-old children can receive a health check funded by Medicare (DoHA 2010a). The 2008-09 Budget allocated \$25.6 million over four years to implement the initiative (Treasury 2008) (chapter 12).
  - The Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2010–15 — was adopted by the Australian Health Ministers in 2009. It aims to promote and support breastfeeding, which was linked to positive health outcomes in babies and mothers. The Government provides direct funding to the Australian Breastfeeding Association and other programs in this area (DoHA ndb).
  - Specific programs to promote the health of indigenous children — such as the Healthy for Life and the New Directions Mothers and Babies programs, which aim to improve the health of Indigenous mothers, infants and children. The New Directions program received funding of \$90.3 million under the National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Early Childhood Development (COAG 2009b).<sup>16</sup> Other examples include the Rural Primary Health Services program and the annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Health Check for children from birth to 14 years of age.
  - Specific programs for children with additional needs — such as the Helping Children with Autism program (FaHCSIA ndd). Support and funding for children with additional needs and their families are available through the National Disability Agreement, FaHCSIA, Medicare and Centrelink.

## Primary health policy

The introduction of national health policy changes may affect the delivery of child health services across Australia.<sup>17</sup> In 2009, The National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission recommended that the Australian Government assume responsibility for policy and funding for primary healthcare services, including child and family health services that are currently funded by state and local governments (NHHRC 2009). From July 2011, the Australian Government will assume funding and policy responsibility for primary health care. However, COAG will review the services that will be included under primary health care and whether this will include child health (Commonwealth of Australia 2010).

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<sup>16</sup> This National Partnership Agreement is one of a suite of agreements under the broader national Closing the Gap strategy that aims to improve Indigenous life expectancy, access to early childhood education and educational and employment achievement.

<sup>17</sup> The National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement was signed by COAG in 2010. It transfers the responsibility for general practice, primary health services and the aged care system to the Australian Government, which will also continue to provide the majority of public hospital funding. The overall cost of the reform is estimated at \$7.4 billion (DoHA ndc).

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The National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission also recommended a universal delivery model that begins before birth and includes periodic assessments and consultations until the child reaches eight years of age. Specific services will be offered to families whose children have additional needs (NHHRC 2009).

Concurrently, a draft National Framework for Child and Family Health Services has been prepared for the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council. The framework aims to create a national benchmark for child health services and the skills required in this area (Allen Consulting 2009).

## **F.18 Child health services in New South Wales: the role of the State Government**

Most child health services are funded and provided by the State Government through eight area health services operating within the New South Wales Department of Health.<sup>18</sup> Some services are provided as part of Families NSW, a whole-of-government strategy that aims to promote the health and wellbeing of children. There are a number of policy initiatives in the area of child health.

- The Maternal and Child Health Primary Health Care Policy is part of the Families NSW Supporting Families Early policy package, which was issued in March 2010. It sets the guidelines for the provision of maternal and child health services in New South Wales (NSW Department of Health 2010b).
- Safe Start is the second component of the Supporting Families Early policy package, relating specifically to parental wellbeing and skills, and child and family mental health (NSW Department of Health 2010d).
- The Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy (AMIHS) aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous mothers and their babies, through 30 different programs provided across the State (NSW Department of Health 2010a).
- NSW Kids will be a new branch within the Department of Health that will take responsibility for all health policies for children and young people. Preparation for the establishment of the new branch is underway, following a review of the New South Wales public health system (NSW Department of Health 2010a).
- Keep Them Safe was introduced in 2009, to overhaul the child protection system in New South Wales. The program, which received funding of \$750 million, includes provisions for early prevention and intervention services provided in a

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<sup>18</sup> There are also three child health networks within the Department of Health, that provide support for health professionals who work with children (NSW Department of Health ndc).

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community setting. These aim to strengthen existing programs, such as Families NSW (DoPC nd).

### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

The State Government does not impose any specific licensing requirements on child health providers, and there is no monitoring and enforcement legislation. These are addressed by the national registration boards for each relevant occupation (see section F.17).

Guidelines for the provision of child health services are included in various policy documents. The Child and Family Health Nursing Professional Practice Framework sets out expectations of child and family health nurses (NSW Department of Health 2011). The Maternal and Child Health Primary Health Care Policy sets out that child and family health nurses should be registered nurses or midwives with qualifications in child and family health. However, some area health services employ community health nurses and provide in-house training on child and family health issues (NSW Department of Health 2010b).

### **Funding and provision**

In 2008-09, the New South Wales State and local governments spent \$1257 million on community health (which includes child health), compared with \$1297 million spent in the previous year (AIHW 2010a). The State Government funds the direct provision of child health services, as well as supporting non-government bodies that offer services to children and families.

The area health services across the State provide various child health services, either in the family home, dedicated child and family health centres, early childhood centres, or via community health centres. Overall, child health services operate at over 400 sites across the State (NSW Department of Health 2010c).

Child and family health nurses at early childhood health centres or community health centres check children's development, and advise parents on a range of issues. In 2007-08, 60 per cent of babies aged 0–11 months and 35 per cent of children aged 1–4 years attended an early childhood health centre (NSW Department of Health 2010c).

As part of the Families NSW initiative, the New South Wales Department of Health is aiming to offer a home visit to every family in the two weeks after the birth of a baby. In 2008-09, about 90 per cent of families were offered a visit (NSW

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Department of Health 2010a). Specific home visiting programs are offered to families with additional needs through the sustained health home visit program. There are also targeted programs for Indigenous families, those living in rural and remote areas, and families from CALD backgrounds.

Following the initial home visit, a schedule of seven health checks up until the age of four is offered through early childhood health and community health centres. Families can be referred to family care cottages, or family care centres, which offer more residential services and intensive support to parents encountering difficulties with their child feeding, sleeping or behaviour. The New South Wales Department of Health also funds private providers of residential services for parents with young children, as well as phone lines providing health and parenting advice (NSW Department of Health 2010a).

Families whose children have additional needs can access services through the Early Childhood Intervention Coordination Program, managed by the Aging, Disability and Home Care agency within the Department of Human Services. The program brings together services from a number of government departments, such as health, community services, disability and home care, and education and training, to support children and families (DADHC nd).

The NSW Department of Health also offers two health screening programs to young children. The New South Wales Statewide Infant Screening – Hearing (SWISH) program offers a hearing test to all newborn babies. Tests are often carried out in hospitals or at early childhood centres. (NSW Department of Health ndd). The Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Screening (StEPS) offers universal vision tests to 4-year-olds. Tests are conducted at preschools, LDC centres and early childhood centres (NSW Department of Health ndc).

The New South Wales Government funds and coordinates the provision of vaccines. Most children receive their immunisations from a general practitioner (GP). However, local councils, public hospitals and community health centres also provide immunisation services.<sup>19</sup> Community health centres supplied 7.4 per cent of vaccines to children between 2005 and 2010, while local councils supplied 5.6 per cent. In comparison, GPs provided 84.5 per cent of vaccines (SCRGSP 2011a). In addition to providing funding, the NSW Immunisation Strategy 2008–2011 includes initiatives that target areas of low immunisation coverage as well as promoting the immunisation of Indigenous children (NSW Department of Health 2007).

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<sup>19</sup> Immunisations can be administered by nurses with a specific endorsement, who do not have to be child health nurses (AHPRA 2010).

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## **F.19 Child health services in New South Wales: the role of local government**

The involvement of local governments in child health activities varies. Some councils develop public health plans, which deal mainly with food safety and disease control but also touch on child health issues; other councils include these issues in their social plans (LGSA nd). In a 2004 survey, 31 per cent of councils reported that they ran immunisation clinics and 13 per cent had early childhood health centre policy statements (LGSA 2005).

### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

Councils have a limited role in this area. They are involved in enforcing food safety and sun protection standards within LDC centres (LGSA 2005).

### **Funding and provision**

The level of funding and provision of child health services varies across councils. For example, North Sydney Council provides accommodation for the two early childhood centres operating in its jurisdiction, as well as offering free immunisation services (North Sydney Council 2008). Bankstown Council also supports early childhood centres, and provides immunisation services and funds initiatives to promote breastfeeding and immunisation (Bankstown Council 2006).

## **F.20 Child health services in Victoria: the role of the State Government**

### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

There are no specific State Government licensing, monitoring and enforcement arrangements covering child health in Victoria.

A number of standards and guidelines affect child health in Victoria (DEECD 2010m). For example, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (DEECD) Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program Standards provide a framework for the delivery of MCH services, support the provision of clinical and corporate governance, and provide a systematic approach to improving service delivery and safety. The Program Standards are recommended for use by the MCH workforce and support structures, including local government. They set out

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the qualifications required of MCH nurses, which include registration as both a nurse and a midwife, as well as post graduate qualifications in child and family health nursing. Councils are encouraged to use the program standards to assess service quality (DEECD 2009g).

## **Funding and provision**

The Victorian Government funds child health and related support services by approximately \$100 million each year, and provides a further \$65 million for early intervention services. These services include child health services and parenting support as well as specific services aimed at vulnerable families or families with additional needs. Early intervention services aim to improve the lives of children with disabilities or developmental delay. The Victorian Government provides few of these services directly (DEECD 2010m).

Child health services include:

- universal MCH services — jointly funded by the State and local governments, providing ‘key ages and stages’ consultations to children from birth to school age, including an initial home visit soon after the birth of a child. Victorian Government funding contributions are based on an enrolment-based funding formula, and weightings are applied for services to low socioeconomic and rural areas
- enhanced MCH services — fully funded by the Victorian Government, supplementing universal MCH services by providing more intensive support to children and families where there are multiple risk factors (for more on these services, see section F.21 below)
- the MCH telephone line — providing information and advice on health issues to parents with children from birth to five years of age.

## **Workforce initiatives**

The Victorian Government and local governments in Victoria have been trying to attract more nurses to the MCH specialty. Workforce shortages are more pronounced in rural and urban fringe areas. DEECD funds scholarships for nurses, which are targeted to high priority areas where there are difficulties recruiting and retaining staff (Victorian Government, sub. 87). Many councils are also offering scholarships to nurses to gain the required qualifications, and a special website has been set up to offer more information to prospective applicants (Municipal Association of Victoria 2010a, ndc).

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## **F.21 Child health services in Victoria: the role of local government**

### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

Local governments in Victoria do not have a direct licensing or enforcement role in the child health sector. Based on the standards set by the State Government, local councils in Victoria require MCH nurses to hold specific qualifications (nursing, midwifery and specific child health studies) in order to be employed. The delivery of services is monitored by the State Government against agreed targets, such as the number of clients attending a specific service (DEECD 2009g). Local government has legislative responsibility for immunisation services.

### **Funding and provision**

Universal and enhanced MCH services are funded jointly by the State and local government (see provision below).

Universal MCH services and enhanced MCH services are delivered by all local councils across Victoria (DEECD 2010m). In 2008, 1150 nurses worked in family and child health in the State, mostly employed part time (AIHW 2010b).

The universal service is available to all children born or living in Victoria, from birth to six years of age. There are ten scheduled consultations offered to parents at key stages in the child's life.<sup>20</sup> In addition to nurses, some local governments employ allied health professionals, such as lactation consultants, who can provide specific advice and support to parents. Enhanced services are offered to children at risk of poor outcomes, and include more targeted and intensive services and referrals to other professionals.

MCH nurses also provide family support services by facilitating workshops for parents and other 'community strengthening activities', as well as offering counselling and referrals to mothers. In 2009-10, MCH nurses were involved in about 50 000 counselling sessions for mothers, and issued about 12 000 referrals for further support on emotional, physical, social or domestic violence issues. (DEECD 2010i).

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<sup>20</sup> Nurses visit 99.8 per cent of newborns for the initial home consultation and 96.6 per cent of parents take their babies to the 2-week check-up; however, by the time the child is three and a half, the attendance rate declines to 63.1 per cent (DEECD 2010i).

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From 2005 to 2010, councils in Victoria provided 45 per cent of vaccines administered to children under seven years of age (GPs accounted for 53 per cent). This is the highest percentage of council involvement across Australia — on a national basis, councils provided 17 per cent of vaccines (SCRGSP 2011a). In Victoria, councils are required by State law to coordinate vaccination services, and many provide them directly (Municipal Association of Victoria ndb). The provision structure differs across councils, through immunisation teams, MCH centres and outsourcing (DHS 2007).

## **F.22 Child health services in Queensland: The role of the State Government**

### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

The Queensland Government has a limited role in the licensing, monitoring and enforcement in the area of child health.

### **Funding and provision**

The Queensland Government funds and provides a range of services that support the health and wellbeing of children. These sometimes combine ECD services such as child health and family support.

- Child Health Services provide prevention and early intervention services for children (and caregivers) aged up to 12 years, through its Community Child Health Centres. Community Child Health Centres provide multidisciplinary child health and parenting support, including health surveillance and screening, growth and development assessment, infant feeding, immunisation, and behavioural and parent support (Queensland Health 2008a).
- The Child and Youth Mental Health Service provides specialist mental health services for children and young people (up to 18 years) and assistance to their families (Queensland Health 2008b).
- The Queensland Health Immunisation Program aims to minimise incidence of major vaccine preventable diseases by providing immunisation including for vulnerable groups (Queensland Health 2010a).
- The Health Hearing Program includes screening of eligible newborns (Queensland Health 2010a). The Queensland Government will fund Children's Hearing Services by \$16.5 million over four years from 2010-11 (Queensland Government 2010b).

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- Newborn and Family Drop-in services provide specialist advice to new parents on a range of issues, including infant feeding and bonding (Queensland Health 2010a).
  - A range of child health fact sheets support parents in caring for their children (Queensland Health 2008b).

Child health services may also be provided as part of integrated early years centres, for example, in Beaudesert, Acacia Ridge, Cairns and Browns Plains (section F.6) (Wilson 2010).

In addition, the Queensland Government is responsible for rolling out several initiatives under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development, including initiatives in Cape York to enhance child and maternal health services (Queensland Health 2010a). The Children's Hearing Services (above) include enhanced access to therapy services for Indigenous children (Queensland Government 2010b).

### **Workforce initiatives**

Queensland Health provides support for the child health workforce, for example, by providing practice guidelines (Queensland Health 2009) and clinical neonatal guidelines (Queensland Health 2010b).

A range of initiatives support the MCH workforces including financial support for Indigenous health workers to take a Certificate IV in Maternal and Child Health (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) course (Queensland Health 2010a).

## **F.23 Child health services in Queensland: The role of local government**

The role of local government in the child health sector is limited to the provision of a few services. In Queensland, some local governments manage immunisation clinics. For example, Logan City Council provides free immunisation clinics on a regular basis at a number of locations (Logan City Council 2010).

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## **F.24 Child health services in South Australia: the role of the State Government**

The Women's and Children's Health Network (formerly Children, Youth and Women's Health Service), which is part of SA Health, is the main provider of child health services in South Australia.

### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

There are no specific licensing requirements for child health staff in South Australia, other than the national registration requirements for their profession. To be employed as a child and family health nurse in South Australia, nurses generally require a relevant postgraduate qualification.

### **Funding and provision**

The Women's and Children's Health Network provides an array of child health services.

- Health checks — children are offered five free health checks between birth and six years of age that are administered by a child and family health nurse, through a Child and Family Health Centre. The first check is usually done in the family home, soon after birth, as part of the universal contact visit program. Families with specific needs can be referred to the family home visiting program, which offers 34 visits until the child reaches their second birthday. In 2009-10, 19 000 universal visits were undertaken and about 1500 families were involved in the family home visiting program. Child and family health nurses also visit all preschools to provide health checks for children and provide some immunisation services.
- More intensive programs, such as day and residential services, which offer parents extensive support with infant behaviour and other issues.
- Hearing checks are offered to all newborn babies through the Universal Neonatal Hearing Screening Program (UNHS). Older children (up to 12-year-olds) can also be referred for hearing assessments.
- Specific services for Indigenous children and their families are provided by Aboriginal Cultural Consultants. Their role is to assist Indigenous families in gaining access to the various services offered by the Women's and Children's Health Network, and support non-Indigenous staff to deliver these services.

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- Specific services for children with additional needs include the Early Childhood Intervention Program and the Access Assistant Program. The Early Childhood Intervention Program offers information and support for parents whose children suffer from developmental delays. The Access Assistant Program employs health support officers who assist children with a disability while attending preschool or school (CYWHS ndb).

## **F.25 Child health services in South Australia: the role of local government**

The role of local governments in child health in South Australia has historically focused on the provision of immunisation services. Between 2005 and 2010, 19 per cent of children in South Australia received their immunisation from a local council (in comparison, 9 per cent of immunisations were done at community health centres and 69 per cent were administered by GPs) (SCRGSP 2011a).

## **F.26 Child health services in Western Australia: the role of the State Government**

### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

There are no specific licensing requirements for child health staff in Western Australia, other than the national registration requirements for their profession. Department of Health community health nurses are required to be registered nurses with post graduate qualifications in child and family health.

### **Funding and provision**

The Department of Health provides a range of child health services through its Child and Adolescent Community Health Service.

- Child Development Assessments are conducted by community health nurses for all children between birth and six years. Children receive six checks between birth and three years, and then an assessment in the first year of school attendance (which can be at preschool). Community health nurses check a baby's growth and physical development, and assess maternal and family health and wellbeing. Nurses also provide a link for families to other services within the health system and community, and refer developmental issues for further assessment and treatment (Western Australian Auditor General 2010).

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- Targeted services offer more intensive support for at risk families, such as refugee and Indigenous families. Services include health surveillance, universal and targeted prevention, early identification and intervention, health promotion and education, disease control, health care advice and specific family health programs (Western Australian Auditor General 2010; DoH Western Australia nda).
  - The Child Development Service provides a range of assessment, early intervention and treatment services to children with, or at risk of developmental disorders or delay (DoH Western Australia nda).
  - A range of information for families on infant care and child growth (DoH Western Australia ndb).

A number of Indigenous health services across metropolitan and country areas in Western Australia provide family and child health services. These fall under the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA), the peak body for Indigenous community-controlled health services, which receives core funding from the Western Australian Department of Health (Hames 2011).

### **Workforce initiatives**

The State Government, through the Department of Health, provides financial assistance to eligible students through initial registration scholarships, postgraduate scholarships, fellowships and grants (DoH Western Australia ndc). The Office of Aboriginal Health also offers scholarships to Indigenous students currently studying an accredited health services university or TAFE course, or at another registered training organisation (DoH Western Australia ndd).

## **F.27 Child health services in Western Australia: the role of local government**

Though some local governments provide immunisation services, local councils in Western Australia play a limited role in child health.

## **F.28 Child health services in Tasmania: the role of the State Government**

The Tasmanian Government developed the Kids Come First project, a ‘whole-of government’ initiative to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for

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children and young people. The project measures outcomes for over 90 indicators across 30 outcomes, from infant development to lowering crime levels (DHHS 2009). In 2009-10, the State Government spent \$92.3 million on child and family services, which includes both child health and family support (DoTF 2010).

## **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

The State Government has no role in licensing within the child health area. Nurses and other allied health professionals need to be registered with the relevant national body, such as the AHPRA, and hold appropriate qualifications.

Monitoring and enforcement of child health services is managed by the State Government. For example, State Government recruitment processes require nurses to hold a suitable postgraduate qualification to work in child health. Other processes are in place to monitor practice and ensure accountability.

## **Funding and provision**

The State Government, through the Department of Health and Human Services provides funding for child health services, which offer universal services to all under 5-year-old children and their families. This includes a schedule of assessments commencing at two weeks of age and continuing until the child reaches three-and-a-half years of age.<sup>21</sup> In addition, a variety of support services are available to parents.

State-funded services include:

- parenting centres, which offer more intensive support to parents of children aged from birth to five years
- the Child Development Unit, which offers services and assistance to children who are suspected of suffering from delayed development
- a number of regional maternity services, which also include child health and parenting support, through the outpatient departments of regional hospitals
- home visits under the CU@Home program, which specifically targets young mothers (15–19 years old)

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<sup>21</sup> Attendance rates tend to fall rapidly — 90 per cent of newborns attend check-ups between birth and 4 weeks of age, falling to 67 per cent by the time they reach 6 months of age (DHHS 2009).

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- a 24-hour phone help line, providing support and information for families with young children
  - the Tasmanian Autism Spectrum Diagnostic Assessment Service, which provides comprehensive assessment services to children who may have an autism spectrum disorder.

## **F.29 Child health services in Tasmania: the role of local government**

The role of local government in the child health sector centres on immunisation services. Most local councils offer these services, either through immunisation clinics or at schools, and employ nurses to provide them. For example, in 2009-10, Hobart City Council employed two registered immunisation nurses as part of its Environmental Health Unit (Hobart City Council 2010). Across the State, councils provide 12 per cent of vaccinations to children (87 per cent are vaccinated by GPs) (SCRGSP 2011a).

## **F.30 Child health services in the Northern Territory: The role of the Territory Government**

The Northern Territory Government, through the Department of Health and Families, contributes to the health of children through various services offered by government and non-government providers in a range of settings (such as community care centres, rural health centres and clinics) (DHF NT 2010).

Improving Indigenous health and the wellbeing of families is a priority area for the Department of Health and Families, and is reflected in the Five Year Framework for Action. This includes work with the Australian Government and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliances Northern Territory to reform the Northern Territory Aboriginal Primary Health Care system.

The Northern Territory Government is currently developing an Early Child Development Plan. Included among its priority areas is the Healthy Children and Young People in Safe and Strong Families project for Northern Territory Growth Towns. It encompasses integrated early childhood services that include health, education and family support (DHF NT 2010).

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## Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

The Northern Territory Government has a limited role in licensing, monitoring and enforcement within the child health area.

## Funding and provision

The Northern Territory Government, through the Department of Health and Families, provides numerous health services to children, including:

- postnatal home visits — offered to mothers after early discharge from hospital and include support, education and information on issues ranging from breastfeeding to family relationships. These are provided through community health care centres (DHF NT 2011a)
- free oral health services to children — provided to infants, and pre-primary school children
- free oral health services to Indigenous children — 3900 oral health services were provided in 2009-10 through the Closing the Gap program funded by the Australian Government
- Northern Territory Infant Feeding Guidelines — for mothers and caregivers in remote communities
- childcare services nutritionists — offer nutrition education and meals to children in ECEC facilities
- Healthy Under Five Kids Program — providing child health services to Indigenous children in remote communities, under the Maternal, Child and Youth Health program
- Darwin Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) — providing pregnancy, birth and postnatal care to remote Indigenous women, also under the Maternal, Child and Youth Health program
- Growth Assessment and Action (GAA) checks — for infants and children under five years who are assessed regularly as part of the Remote Health strategy
- immunisation program — including immunisation of children as part of the Remote Health strategy and broader Child and Family Health Nursing Services
- Outreach Audiology and ear, nose, throat service — targeted support to improve hearing in Indigenous children
- other support includes the Aboriginal Child Health Advisory Group that guides research and program agendas to improve child health across the Northern Territory (DHF NT 2010).

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### **F.31 Child health services in the Northern Territory: the role of local government**

Local government in the Northern Territory has a limited role in the provision of child health services. For example, MCH services delivered in the Palmerston Community Care Centre are provided and managed by the Northern Territory Government (DHF NT 2011b).

### **F.32 Child health services: the role of the ACT Government**

The Child, Youth & Women's Health Program within the ACT Health Directorate offers universal health services to children and their families.<sup>22</sup> The Community Services Directorate is also involved in the provision of child health services, through Therapy ACT, Disability ACT and three Children and Family Centres.

#### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

As is the case in other jurisdictions, child health practitioners in the ACT must comply with the national requirements of the relevant licensing board (such as AHPRA for nurses). MCH nurses working in the ACT are required to be registered nurses and hold postgraduate qualifications in child and family health.

#### **Funding and provision**

MCH nurses offer health checks to all children in the ACT, beginning soon after birth. Services can be accessed by appointment or at drop-in child health clinics. The first appointment, at 1–4 weeks after birth, is done at home. Vulnerable families are offered more intensive home visiting programs under the Parenting Enhancement Program. Nurses visit preschools to provide an additional health screening before children start school, and also provide school-based nursing services such as immunisations.

Nurses can refer families to a range of other health checks that are provided by ACT Health, including vision and hearing screening and asthma support. Families who need additional support with their child's feeding, sleep or behaviour can be

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<sup>22</sup> In March 2011, the ACT Government restructured its departments into a single ACT public service agency, comprising nine directorates. As a result, ACT Health became part of the Health Directorate (ACT Government 2011).

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referred to the QEII Family Centre, which offers a residential service (ACT Health nd). Community health centres also provide about 40 per cent of childhood vaccinations in the ACT (SCRGSP 2011a).<sup>23</sup>

Allied health services, such as speech pathology and physiotherapy, are available to children up until school age through drop-in clinics run by Therapy ACT, a unit within the Community Services Directorate. Therapy ACT also offers specific services for children with autism spectrum disorders (DHCS nde). Families of children with additional needs can access services and support through Disability ACT (DHCS ndb).

### **F.33 Family support services: the role of the Australian Government**

The Australian Government supports families and children by funding a range of support services. The Family Support Program is administered by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

From July 2011, the Australian Government will implement a new structure for the Family Support Program, which will comprise two streams: Family and Children's Services (for which FaHCSIA has policy responsibility) and Family Law Services (for which the Attorney-General's department has policy responsibility). The Family and Children's Services will comprise four service types: Communities for Children services, family and relationship services, specialist services, and community playgroups (FaHCSIA ndc). Funding for the Family and Children's Services stream of the Family Support Program from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2014 is \$588 million.

Prior to the implementation of the new structure, the program was delivered through two main streams.

- Family Relationship Services, which aim to improve family functioning, particularly for disadvantaged or at-risk families. In 2010-11, government expenditure on these services was expected to reach \$105.2 million.
- Children and Parenting Services, which are targeted support services for parents and children at risk or in disadvantaged communities, to improve child development. The budgeted expenditure on these services in 2010-11 was \$86.4 million (FaHCSIA 2010f).

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<sup>23</sup> This is a very high proportion compared with the national average, which stands at 8 per cent (SCRGSP 2011a).

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The program includes a number of early childhood development services.

- Communities for Children — delivers prevention and early intervention programs for families with young children at 49 sites (including 8 Communities for Children Plus sites) across Australia. At each site, the Australian Government funds non-government organisations to act as facilitating partners that engage state government, local government and smaller local organisations to deliver a range of activities (FaHCSIA nda).
- Invest to Grow —includes a variety of projects aimed specifically at younger children, including Child Care Links. Child Care Links aims to improve the health and wellbeing of young children by developing childcare centres and community services in disadvantaged areas as community hubs. These aim to link families with young children to local support services and to strengthen community networks. Invest to Grow also supports the Raising Children Network website, which provides information for parents of young children (FaHCSIA ndb).
- Playgroups — supported by the Australian Government since 1975. There are over 8500 playgroups in Australia, providing informal settings for interaction for parents and children. This includes supported playgroups for Indigenous children and children with additional needs. Playgroups are facilitated either by the parents, or by paid coordinators in the case of supported groups (FaHCSIA ndf).
- Indigenous Children Program — supports a number of initiatives focusing on Indigenous children. Services are delivered by local organisations at 46 sites. They generally include parenting advice and support, referral services, home visits and playgroups (FaHCSIA nde).
- Responding Early Assisting Children (REACH) — aims to improve access to support services and encourage at-risk and vulnerable families to engage with their community through collaborative approaches. The Australian Government funds 40 REACH projects that provide assistance to children with additional needs and their families via early intervention services, home visits and parenting programs (FaHCSIA ndg).

In addition to the FaHCSIA programs, DEEWR funds the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY). HIPPY offers a mainly home-based parenting and early education program. The Government committed \$32.5 million over four years to the program (DEEWR nde).

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## **F.34 Family support services in New South Wales: the role of the State Government**

The Community Services agency of the Department of Human Services is responsible for funding and providing a wide variety of family support services. In 2009-10, Community Services provided over \$25 million to over 450 different programs and services for families with young children, including parenting programs, phone helplines, playgroups and early intervention services.

The key strategies guiding the State Government's involvement in this area are Families NSW and Keep Them Safe (section F. 18).

A number of family support initiatives are included under Families NSW.

- Triple P — the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) is designed to support parents with children between 3 and 8 years of age, via group sessions or personal consultations. The program is being rolled out across New South Wales and 900 practitioners were trained to deliver sessions. A specific version of Triple P has been tailored to Indigenous communities (Community Services NSW 2010a). The State Government has allocated \$5.2 million to complete the Triple P roll out (Families NSW 2009).
- Volunteer Home Visiting — home visits are available to parents of babies and toddlers, to offer advice, information and support (Families NSW 2009).
- Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy — the strategy offers prevention and early intervention services to 0–5 year-old Indigenous children and their families. These may include parenting programs, supported playgroups, transition to school and other activities. The New South Wales Government plans to build nine integrated Aboriginal child and family centres, commencing in 2011 (Community Services NSW 2010a).
- Early Intervention Family Support — the program is designed for CALD families, with a specific focus on those with children under two years of age.
- Schools as Community Centres — Families NSW along with the Department for Education and Training have been developing 48 schools as community centres to support families with young children. Activities at the schools may include supported playgroups, transition to school programs, and parenting workshops (Families NSW nd).

The Keep Them Safe program highlights early intervention and prevention services. The program allocates funding to support services for children and families, as well as expanding the Brighter Futures program. Brighter Futures has been operating since 2002 and is delivered by Community Services in partnership

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with 14 non-government local lead agencies. It offers support and assistance to vulnerable families with 0–8 year-old children, through case management, home visiting, parenting programs and children’s services for families. In 2009-10, Community Services spent \$47.6 million on the program, which was accessed by more than 3500 families.

The Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Service (IFBS) is a more intensive program for children who are about to enter out-of-home care. It operates at six sites, and another four will be added as part of the Keep Them Safe strategy (Community Services NSW 2010a).

### **F.35 Family support services in New South Wales: the role of local government**

Local government’s involvement in family support services varies across New South Wales. All councils are required by law to develop a social plan that assesses the needs of the community and specific target groups, including children, and sets out council’s response to those needs (DLG 2002). Guided by their social plans, councils support services provided by State Government and non-government organisations. For example, the City of Ryde has developed the Ryde-Hunters Hill Child and Family Interagency, which links together representatives from State Government departments and non-government organisations to improve outcomes for children and families living in its jurisdiction (City of Ryde nd). Holroyd City Council coordinates a transition to school program and a playgroup for children with additional needs (Holroyd City Council nd).

### **F.36 Family support services in Victoria: the role of the State Government**

There are numerous program guidelines for the family support sector in Victoria, such as the In Home Support for Aboriginal Families Program Guidelines (currently under revision) (DEECD 2007) and the Best Start in Action Project Guidelines 2005. Services that support children with additional needs are also guided by specific program standards. In addition, some professions, such as social workers or allied health professionals, may require specific qualifications and registration.

The Victorian Government funds family support programs, and is also involved in providing a limited number of services. Key initiatives include:

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- the Parenting Services program — includes information and resources to parents and professionals, referrals and coordination services to promote the independence and healthy development of families with children
  - a telephone service (Parentline) — provides an access point for information, advice and referral on parenting issues for parents and carers. This service is provided directly by DEECD (DEECD 2010m)
  - the Aboriginal Children and Families, In Home Support program — provides intensive parenting and other support for Indigenous families with children under three years of age
  - the Best Start program — aims to bring together families and service providers, including early childhood services, local government, family and health services and others.

The Victorian Government funds a range of services that support children with additional needs. The Signposts program, an early intervention parenting skills development program, aids families with children with an intellectual disability or developmental delay. Also funded are playgroups and parent groups for Indigenous children and their carers, CALD families, disadvantaged families and children and families affected by disability (DEECD 2010m).

### **F.37 Family support services in Victoria: the role of local government**

Local governments fund the provision of some family support services, such as parenting skills workshops and services for children with additional needs. In addition, councils provide grants, training, planning services and other support to community and not-for-profit groups that deliver family support services (DHS 2007).

A number of local councils provide family support services directly. The services provided include:

- support for parents through workshops and information sessions facilitated by MCH nurses, playgroups and parent groups for vulnerable families (DEECD 2010m)
- specific services for children with additional needs and their carers. Services can vary, but generally include personal care, respite care, transport services, and social support.

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## **F.38 Family support services in Queensland: the role of the State Government**

The Queensland Government provides some family support programs and assistance. This includes a range of services, such as integrated early years centres, and the Newborn and Family Drop-in service (section F.22).

- The Positive Parenting Program aims to prevent severe behavioural, emotional and developmental problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents. Queensland Health provides free information sessions to families (Queensland Health nd).
- The Early Years Health and Wellbeing Program provides services to families of prep-year children with additional support needs at some schools, and helps to build school capacity by supporting vulnerable families to improve their children's health, development and learning outcomes (Community Services Queensland 2009f).
- A range of parenting information sheets support parents in caring for their children (DET Queensland 2008a).

The Queensland Government also funds family support programs, such as those provided by the Benevolent Society in the Cairns Early Years Centre (DET Queensland 2008b).

Support services are also available to families with a young child who has (or is at risk of) significant developmental delay. Services are available for children and may include assessment and strategies to promote the children's learning and development, information sessions, support groups, connections with other services and agencies, as well as information and support for community agencies to promote the inclusion of children with a disability (Community Services Queensland nd).

## **F.39 Family support services in Queensland: the role of local government**

Local government in Queensland has a limited role in the provision of family support services. In some cases, local councils provide services such as the Rural Family Support program available to families within the Barcaldine Regional area (Barcaldine Regional Council nd).

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## **F.40 Family support services in South Australia: the role of the State Government**

SA Health, through the Women's and Children's Health Network, provides most of the universal family support services. Children with additional needs and their families receive assistance through Disability SA. DECD also provide intervention services to disadvantaged families.

There are numerous universal family support services.

- Parent helpline, a phone information service for parents with children from birth up to 12 years of age, provides advice on health and parenting issues, and can refer users to additional services.
- Parenting groups run through the Child and Family Health Centres in the State, provide education and support to parents.
- The Centre for Parenting, provides information and training on parenting issues for professionals working with families, and runs some parenting groups.
- Child health volunteers, who receive training from the Women's and Children's Health Network, offer home visits to support and assist parents (CYWHS ndb).
- Parenting SA, a State government initiative to support parents, offers information resources to parents through a collection of 'parenting easy guides', including guides for Indigenous and CALD families (CYWHS nda).
- The Early Years and Curriculum unit (with DECD that administers the Learning Together @ Home program), provides assistance to disadvantaged families. This includes home visits and workshops (DECS ndd).

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, through Disability SA, assists children with significant disabilities and children who have been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. Services include a range of therapies (such as speech pathology and occupational therapy) and counselling (DfC South Australia nd). In addition, the State Government funds a variety of services for children with additional needs and their families. For example, Novita Children's Services, which works with children who have physical disabilities or acquired brain injuries, receives financial support from the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (Novita 2010).

Families SA works with non-government organisations to assist vulnerable families. Support services include parenting advice, counselling and in-home assistance. Some services are also delivered through Children's Centres (DfC South Australia 2010).

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## **F.41 Family support services in South Australia: the role of local government**

Local governments' involvement in family support services depends on the needs of their community, and generally includes supporting existing projects and community organisations. For example, Burnside City Council supports the local Child Care Links project (funded by the Australian Government). Through the project, the council supports playgroups and parenting information sessions (City of Burnside nd).

## **F.42 Family support services in Western Australia: the role of the State Government**

The Department for Communities provides a range services for families, parents, carers and children. The Department for Child Protection also provides a range of services to support families.

- Parenting WA offers an information, support and referral service to parents and families with children. It provides assistance on how to manage the challenges of parenting and information on child development. Included are workshops, presentations, parenting groups, and individual parenting support. It also includes home visits (in some areas), primarily for parents and carers with children under the age of six, using staff and trained volunteers (DfC Western Australia 2009b; 2010d).
- Parenting WA Line is a phone information service for parents with children from pre-birth to 18 years of age. Information and advice topics include child development, behaviour management, health issues and family relationships (DfC Western Australia 2009b).
- Parenting WA Library provides a free lending service to people seeking parenting information, including people living in rural and remote areas. Items are sent free of charge with a reply paid envelope for return (DfC Western Australia 2009b).
- Best Beginnings is an interdisciplinary home visiting service for families with infants (0–2 years), which aims to improve child health and wellbeing, parent and family functioning and social support networks. The program responds to individual family needs, and comprises a range of professionals including nurses, teachers, social workers and psychologists (DCP 2010a). The program focuses on prevention, through the provision of long-term contact between families and parent support workers.

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- Best Start for Aboriginal Families aims to work with local communities to provide a family-friendly program that provides support for parents, carers and extended families, and prepares under 5-year-old Indigenous children for school. It includes playgroups and activities for young children and their carers, nutrition and health education programs, and early childhood education services (DfC Western Australia 2009b).
  - The Parent Support service is an in-home service designed to help parents take control of behavioural problems in children aged under 15 years (DCP nd).

In addition, the Early Years program supports communities to work collaboratively with various government agencies and non-government organisations to identify their priorities and develop plans to improve the wellbeing of their young children (DfC Western Australia 2010c).

### **F.43 Family support services in Western Australia: the role of local government**

Local government in the Western Australia has a limited role in the provision of family support services. For example, local councils in the Perth area have created a community services network, which provides residents with information on support services (City of Perth nd).

### **F.44 Family support services in Tasmania: the role of the State Government**

The Tasmanian Government provides a large array of family support services. These services are accessed by 21 per cent of parents with children under five years of age, and single parents are typically over-represented. Parents born outside of Australia are significantly less likely to access family support services (SRC 2009).

The Tasmanian Government is in the process of reforming the structure of its family support services. The reforms have changed the structure of both funding and provision arrangements.

Family support services are now primarily provided via Gateway Services and Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS). Gateways provide a single point of contact and assessment for family support and specialist disability support. IFSS work with parents to address children's needs.

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DHHS also funds a number of specific initiatives in the family support area, including:

- Family Choices, which provides respite and recreation options for children with disabilities. Services are delivered by community organisations either through an established centre, in their homes or through youth groups
- The Early Years Parenting Support, which provides funding to community organisations that support vulnerable parents with children under five years of age
- Kids in Mind, which provides specific support to children whose parents suffer from a mental illness (DHHS 2010).

The Department of Education is also involved in providing services to children with additional needs and their families. The Early Childhood Intervention Service supports 0–4 year-old children who have disabilities or other difficulties. The service is provided by teachers, allied health workers and other professionals, through four Early Learning Tasmania centres or by home visits. Specific programs are offered to children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders and premature infants (DoE Tasmania nda).

## **F.45 Family support services in Tasmania: the role of local government**

Local government in Tasmania has a limited role in the provision of family support services. For example, Glenorchy City Council runs a coordination network that links over 40 providers of child and family support services in the local area. Some councils may provide services to children with disabilities and their families.

## **F.46 Family support services in the Northern Territory: the role of the Territory Government**

The Northern Territory Government, through the Department of Education and Training, provides a range of support services for children with disabilities under its Early Childhood Intervention program. Parents or ECEC staff can refer children to the service (DET NT 2010g).

In addition, the Department of Children and Families provides or funds a range of child and parenting support services. Those services include information sheets for

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parents, safety advice, and Parentline — a confidential telephone counselling service (DCF NT 2011).

The Northern Territory Government provides a range of family support services for Indigenous communities including through its Families as First Teachers — Indigenous Parenting Support Services Program. The child development knowledge component includes family workshops and home visits to strengthen knowledge of child development from birth to three years. The parenting component works to strengthen positive relationships in families including through supported playgroups (DET NT 2011b).

The Maternal, Child and Youth Health (MCYH) program provides support, training and practical assistance to remote health centres and communities and includes parenting and life skills education. It also offers funding to non-government organisations to improve outcomes for women through pregnancy, parenting and life skills education programs (for example, the Core of Life program).

In addition, DHF provides early parenting education through its Strong Women, Strong Babies Strong Culture program to women and girls in remote Indigenous communities (DoH NT 2011; DHF NT 2010).

## **F.47 Family support services in the Northern Territory: the role of local government**

Local government in the Northern Territory has a limited role in the provision of family support services. In some cases, local councils provide services such as Palmerston Council's Strong Mothers program, funded by the Northern Territory Government (City of Palmerston nd).

## **F.48 Family support services: the role of the ACT Government**

A wide range of family support services are provided directly by the Community Services Directorate.<sup>24</sup> The Community Services Directorate also funds non-government organisations to provide family support services, including

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<sup>24</sup> In March 2011, the ACT Government departments were combined into a single ACT public service agency, comprising nine directorates. As a result, the Department of Housing and Community Services became the Community Services Directorate (ACT Government 2011).

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playgroups, parent outreach programs, and counselling. In 2009-10, it spent over \$3 million on funding these programs (DHCS 2010a).

A number of family support programs are provided by the Community Services Directorate, through the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support.

- Child and Family Centres, which support families with young children within their local community. The services offered by the three centres include parenting education programs such as Triple P (section F.34), children's behaviour clinics, supported and targeted playgroups and specific programs for Indigenous children and their families. Midwives, MCH nurses and allied health professionals also operate from the centres (DHCS nda).
- Schools as Communities, which is a program for children and families at risk. Services are provided from preschool and primary school settings, and the Child and Family Centres. Individual case management, group programs for children, parenting support program, information, advice and referrals to additional services are available through this program. (DHCS ndd).
- ParentLink, which is an information resource for families on parenting issues and services available in the community (DHCS ndc).

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