
D Community services preface

Part D: Community services preface

Families are the principal providers of care for children, older people and people with a disability (ABS 2001). Community services aim to:

- help families to undertake these roles
- fulfil these roles when families are not in a position to provide care
- provide interventions where individual needs are not able to be met by the community without special intervention.

Community services provide support to sustain and nurture the functioning of individuals, families and groups, to maximise their potential for development and to enhance community wellbeing (LGCSA 2002). Although community services are generally targeted to the individual, they may be delivered in larger settings. Services are typically provided by government and the not-for-profit sector, but the for-profit sector also has an important role (for example, as owners of aged care facilities). Community services also contribute to the development of community infrastructure to service needs (AIHW 2005).

Cross-cutting community services issues

Community services pathways

Although this Report discusses three areas of community services in separate chapters, it is recognised that there are many linkages between different community services. Governments are increasingly emphasising the need for integrated, client-centred community services.

Many community services are linked by the provision of these services to individuals at different stages of life. Although some community services only apply to people in specific age groups (for example, child protection services or aged care services), other services are not as strictly age-specific (for example,

disability services and SAAP). Some individuals may receive multiple services — for example, a child who is in receipt of juvenile justice services together with homelessness or child protection and disability services. Disability services may continue throughout an individual’s lifetime and overlap with provision of aged care services.

The sequence of interventions or services may be referred to as ‘pathways’ of community service provision. However, there is limited information on the patterns of access by individuals to the range of community services, either concurrently or in succession over a lifetime. A greater understanding of the links between the use of various community services, the nature of these links, and whether interventions in one area of service provision result in reduced need for other services, will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the sector overall.

An example of relevant research is a longitudinal study of Indigenous children (*Footprints In Time*) by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), into the links between early childhood experiences and later life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, covering areas such as health, culture, education, housing and family relationships (FaHCSIA 2008).

References

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- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2005, *National Community Services Information Strategic Plan 2005–2009*, Cat. No. AUS 68, Canberra.
- FaHCSIA (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) 2008, *Research News*, Issue 31, Canberra.
- LGCSA (Local Government Community Services Association of Australia) 2002, *Working Together to Develop Our Communities Good practice and benchmarking in Local Government community development and community services* <http://www.lgcsaa.org.au/benchmarking.htm> (accessed 10 October 2008).