
14 Children's services

Children's services aim to meet the care, education and development needs of children, although the emphasis on these broad objectives may differ across the services. Child care services reported in this chapter include those provided to children aged less than 13 years, usually by someone other than the child's parents or guardian. Preschool services are provided to children mainly in the year or two before they commence full time schooling.

This chapter presents performance and descriptive information for government funded and/or delivered child care and preschool services. Unless otherwise stated, the data relate to services that are supported by the Australian, State and Territory governments and provided for children aged less than 13 years. Local governments also plan, fund and deliver children's services. Given data limitations, however, this chapter records data on local government activities only where Australian, State and Territory government funding and licensing are involved. The chapter does not include services that do not receive government funding (unless otherwise noted).

A profile of children's services is presented in section 14.1. This provides a context for assessing the performance indicators presented later in the chapter. All jurisdictions have agreed to develop, and aim to report, comparable indicators; a framework of performance indicators is outlined in section 14.2. The data are discussed in section 14.3 and future directions for performance reporting are discussed in section 14.4. The chapter concludes with jurisdictions' comments in section 14.5. Definitions of terms specific to children's services are found in section 14.6.

Changes to reporting on children's services this year include reporting against two performance indicators for the first time and improvements to data quality and comparability. Major changes include the reporting for the first time of data on service costs and demand for additional services, and the adoption for geographic data of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification of Remoteness Areas.

Supporting tables

Supporting tables for chapter 14 are provided on the CD-ROM enclosed with the Report. The files are provided in Microsoft Excel format as

\Publications\Reports\2005\Attach14A.xls and in Adobe PDF format as \Publications\Reports\2005\Attach14A.pdf.

Supporting tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 14A.3 is table 3 in the electronic files). These files can also be found on the Review web page (www.pc.gov.au/gsp). Users without Internet access can contact the Secretariat to obtain these tables (see details on the inside front cover of the Report).

14.1 Profile of children's services

Service overview

Children's services are provided using a variety of service delivery types that can be grouped into the following six broad categories:

- *Centre-based long day care* — comprises services aimed primarily at 0–5 year olds, provided in a centre usually by a mix of qualified and other staff. Educational, care and recreational programs are provided based on the developmental needs, interests and experience of each child. In some jurisdictions, primary school children may also receive care before and after school, and during school vacations. Centres typically operate for at least eight hours per day on normal working days, for a minimum of 48 weeks per year.
- *Family day care* — comprises services provided in the carer's home. The care is largely aimed at 0–5 year olds, but primary school children may also receive care before and after school, and during school vacations. Central coordination units in all states and territories organise and support a network of carers, often with the help of local governments.¹
- *Occasional care* — comprises services usually provided at a centre on an hourly or sessional basis for short periods or at irregular intervals for parents who need time to attend appointments, take care of personal matters, undertake casual and part time employment, study or have temporary respite from full time parenting. These services provide developmental activities for children and are aimed primarily at 0–5 year olds. Centres providing these services usually employ a mix of qualified and other staff.

¹ In WA, family day care licences can be issued for groups aged 0–5 years and 5–12 years, allowing for licence holders to provide vacation care, before and after school hours care, as well as long day care.

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- *Preschool* — comprises services usually provided by a qualified teacher on a sessional basis in dedicated preschools. Preschool programs or curricula may also be provided in long day care centres and other settings. These services are primarily aimed at children in the year before they commence full time schooling (that is, when children are 4 years old in all jurisdictions), although younger children may also attend in all jurisdictions except Victoria and the NT.²
 - *Outside school hours care* — comprises services provided for school aged children (5–12 year olds) outside school hours during term and vacations. Care may be provided on student free days and when school finishes early.
 - *Other services* — comprise government funded services to support children with additional needs or in particular situations (including children from an Indigenous or non-English speaking background, children with a disability or of parents with a disability, and children living in regional and remote areas).

Roles and responsibilities

The Australian Government and the State and Territory governments have different but complementary roles in supporting children’s services. Both levels of government help fund services, provide information and advice to parents and service providers, and help plan, set and maintain operating standards.

The Australian Government’s roles and responsibilities for child care include:

- assisting families to participate in the social and economic life of the community by providing child care services and payments (such as Child Care Benefit)
- planning the location of services, in conjunction with other levels of government
- providing information and advice to parents and providers about the availability of Australian Government funded services and some State and Territory funded services
- helping to enhance the quality of child care by funding the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) to administer the following quality assurance systems for children’s services:
 - the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) for long day care centres
 - Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA) for family day care schemes

² In Tasmania, the flexibility to enrol children of pre-kindergarten age is permitted only under limited circumstances (such as for gifted children or children previously enrolled in another State or Territory who now reside in Tasmania).

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- Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (OSHCQA) for outside school hours care services.

Participation in the quality assurance systems is required to remain eligible for continued Child Care Benefit funding approval from the Australian Government:

- providing information, support and training to service providers by funding organisations
- providing operational and capital funding to some providers.

State and Territory governments' roles and responsibilities vary across jurisdictions and may include:

- providing operational and capital funding to non-government service providers
- delivering some services directly (especially preschool services)
- developing new child care and preschool services
- licensing and setting standards for children's services providers
- monitoring and resourcing licensed and/or funded children's services providers
- providing information, support, training and development opportunities for children's services providers
- assisting services in enhancing quality by providing curriculum and policy support and advice, as well as training and development for management and staff
- planning to ensure the appropriate mix of services is available to meet the needs of the community
- providing information and advice to parents and others about operating standards and the availability of services
- providing dispute resolution and complaints management processes.

State and Territory governments' roles in, and objectives for, children's services differ from those of the Australian Government. The Australian Government provides financial support to families principally through payment of Child Care Benefit. The benefit is payable to families using approved child care services or registered informal carers. Currently, it is generally the case that State and Territory governments are responsible for providing educational and developmental opportunities, such as preschool services.

Quality of care

Both levels of government are active in maintaining the quality of care provided by children's services. The mechanisms used include licensing, quality assurance, the measurement of performance against standards, and outcomes linked to funding. These mechanisms are used in addition to the provision of curriculum and policy support and advice, and the training and development of management and staff.

Licensing

State and Territory governments set legislative and regulatory requirements for the licensing of children's services and monitor adherence to these requirements. These regulations include safety standards, staff qualifications, child/staff ratios and health and safety requirements.

The Australian, State and Territory governments have jointly developed national standards for centre-based long day care, family day care and outside school hours care services. These standards express a national view about the level of care all Australians should expect from the different types of child care service available to them. The types of service covered, the standards that apply, and the extent of implementation of these standards vary across jurisdictions.

Quality assurance

The Australian Government has implemented quality assurance systems for Australian Government funded centre-based long day care services, family day care services and outside school hours care services. These quality assurance systems focus on quality outcomes for children. They are processes of self-study and improvement against principles of good quality care. To be eligible for Child Care Benefit and other funding support, child care services are required to register and satisfactorily participate in quality assurance. Quality assurance is designed to build on and complement the State and Territory government licensing requirements (where they exist).

Funding performance standards and outcomes

State and Territory governments impose varying performance requirements for funding children's services. These requirements may include: the employment of higher qualified staff than required by licensing or minimum standards; self-assessment of quality; and a demonstration of the delivery of quality educational and recreational programs.

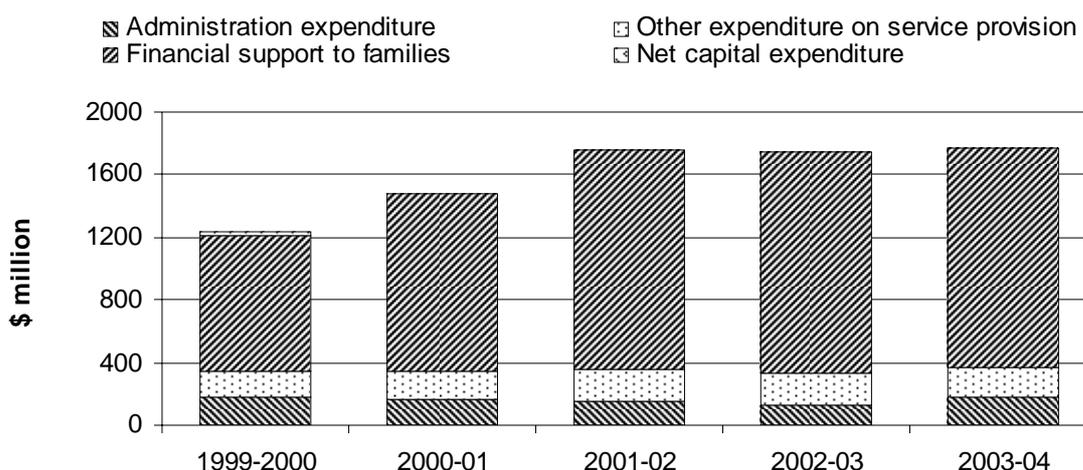
Funding

Total Australian, State and Territory government expenditure on children's services was approximately \$2.4 billion in 2003-04, compared with \$2.3 billion (in real terms) in 2002-03 (table 14A.4).

Australian Government expenditure accounted for 74.5 per cent (\$1.8 billion) of total government expenditure on children's services in 2003-04. The major component of Australian Government expenditure was financial support to families through assistance with fees, which accounted for 78.8 per cent (\$1.4 billion) of Australian Government expenditure on children's services. Administration expenditure accounted for a further 9.8 per cent (\$173.8 million), and other expenditure on service provision and net capital expenditure accounted for the remaining 10.9 per cent (\$193.1 million) and 0.5 per cent (\$9.2 million) respectively (figure 14.1).

State and Territory government expenditure on children's services in 2003-04 was approximately \$608.3 million, of which other expenditure on service provision comprised around 50.3 per cent (\$306.0 million). Administration expenditure, financial support to families and net capital expenditure accounted for 40.3 per cent (\$245.3 million), 7.6 per cent (\$46.1 million) and 1.2 per cent (\$7.2 million) respectively (table 14A.4).

Figure 14.1 **Australian Government real expenditure on children's services (2003-04 dollars)**



Source: Department of Family and Community Services (DFaCS) (unpublished); table 14A.4.

In the distribution of total State and Territory government expenditure across all children's service types, the provision of preschool services accounted for the

largest proportion (around 80.6 per cent, or \$490.1 million, for those jurisdictions for which data are available) (tables 14A.24, 14A.33, 14A.42, 14A.51, 14A.60, 14A.69, 14A.78 and 14A.87). The Australian Government provides supplementary funding for the preschool education of Indigenous children in all jurisdictions.

Size and scope

Child care services

The Australian Government supported 561 876 child care places in 2004 — an increase of 8.5 per cent on the number in 2003 (table 14A.7). The majority of Australian Government supported child care places were outside school hours care places (45.2 per cent), followed by centre-based long day care places (40.9 per cent), family day care places (13.3 per cent), occasional care places (0.5 per cent) and other care places (0.2 per cent). State and Territory governments supported at least 180 000 preschool places in 2003-04 (tables 14A.25, 14A.34, 14A.43, 14A.52, 14A.61, 14A.70, 14A.79 and 14A.88).

Approximately 839 000 children (24.4 per cent of children aged 12 years or younger) used Australian, State and Territory government funded and/or provided child care in 2003-04 (tables 14A.1, 14A.9, 14A.26, 14A.35, 14A.44, 14A.53, 14A.62, 14A.71, 14A.80 and 14A.89). Of these children, around 568 000 were aged 5 years or younger. Changes to data collection approaches and the exclusion of certain services funded by some jurisdictions reduce the comparability of these data across jurisdictions.

Table 14.1 Children using Australian, State and Territory government funded and/or provided child care, 2003-04 (per cent)^a

<i>Age</i>	<i>NSW^b</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA^c</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
0–5 years	48.9	26.8	39.4	24.5	31.1	33.4	38.0	22.5	37.1
6–12 years	12.9	13.4	16.7	8.6	22.0	14.7	22.6	13.9	14.2

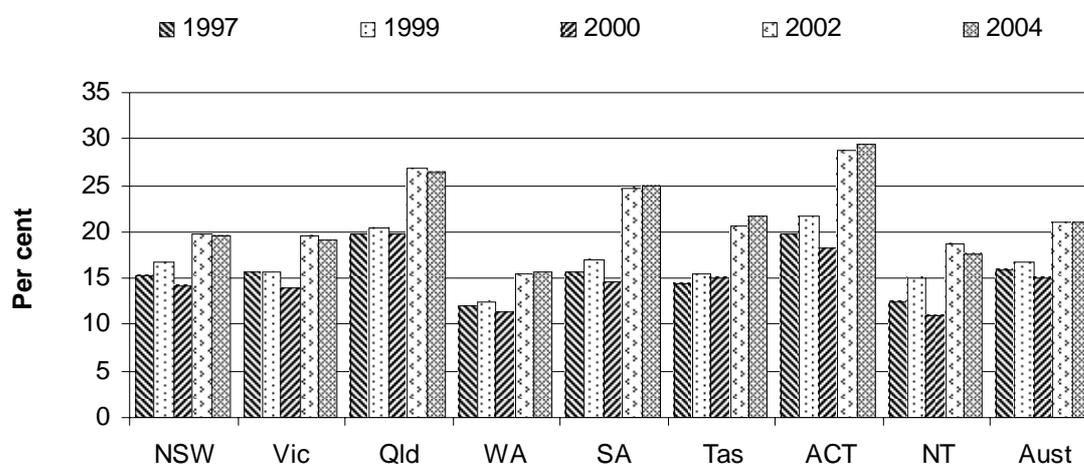
^a Australian Government data are drawn from the March 2004 Australian Government Census of Child Care Services (AGCCCS). ^b NSW used a revised method of calculating the number of children receiving child care and preschool services. This new method of calculation will provide clear trend data for each age group for child care and preschool. The data include estimates based on the rate of survey return for each year. NSW data are not comparable with data for other states and territories. ^c SA excludes children in non-government preschools.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (unpublished), Cat. no. 3201.0; ABS (unpublished), Cat. no. 3222.0; AGCCCS, March 2004 (unpublished); State and Territory governments (unpublished); tables 14A.1, 14A.9, 14A.26, 14A.35, 14A.44, 14A.53, 14A.62, 14A.71, 14A.80 and 14A.89.

Nationally, 722 292 children aged 12 years or younger (21.0 per cent of all children in this age group) attended Australian Government approved child care services in 2004 (figure 14.2). The majority (approximately 471 000 nationally, or 65.1 per cent) of those children were aged 0–5 years. Approximately 30.7 per cent of children aged 5 years or younger attended Australian Government funded and/or provided child care services in 2003-04 (table 14A.9).

The average hours of attendance in child care in 2004 varied considerably across jurisdictions, for all types of service. The average attendance per child at centre-based long day care centres ranged from 28.6 hours per week in the NT to 15.6 hours per week in Tasmania, while the average attendance per child at family day care ranged from 26.1 hours per week in the NT to 14.6 hours per week in Tasmania. The average attendance per child at occasional care services ranged from 17.0 hours per week in the NT to 7.1 hours per week in Victoria, and the average attendance at vacation care during school holidays ranged from 3.9 days per week in the NT to 2.5 days per week in Tasmania (table 14A.8).

Figure 14.2 **Proportion of children aged 0–12 years using Australian Government approved child care^{a, b, c, d}**



^a Excludes children cared for in neighbourhood model services. ^b Australian total includes children in other Territories. ^c Data for 1997, 1999, 2002 and 2004 are drawn from the respective AGCCCS, while data for 2000 are drawn from Centrelink administrative data. The AGCCCS and Centrelink data are not fully comparable and such comparisons need to be treated with care. ^d Data for WA exclude children attending Department of Education provided kindergartens for 4 year olds, who would otherwise be in child care.

Source: ABS (unpublished), Cat. no. 3201.0; ABS (unpublished), Cat. no. 3222.0; AGCCCS, March 2004 (unpublished); Centrelink administrative data, August 2000 (unpublished); table 14A.9.

Preschool services

Preschools provide a range of educational and developmental programs (generally on a sessional basis) to children in the year immediately before they commence full time schooling and also, in some jurisdictions, to children aged 3 years or under (children aged 4 years in WA). The age from which children may attend preschools varies across jurisdictions. Victoria contributes funding towards a preschool program for all 4-year-old children, which is the year before they commence schooling. Children in the NT are usually funded by government to attend preschool in the year before they commence schooling. Younger children in NSW, Queensland, WA, SA, Tasmania and the ACT may also access government funded preschool services.³

Younger Indigenous children living in remote areas in the NT and Queensland also may attend preschools. In SA, a pre-entry program provides one session of preschool a week for 10 weeks in the term before preschool, and children from Indigenous backgrounds may attend preschool at 3 years of age. In the ACT, children from Indigenous backgrounds, children with English as a second language, and children with a hearing impairment and/or whose parents have a hearing impairment may be eligible for early entry into preschool (for 5.25 hours per week) at 3 years of age.

This disparity in the age from which children may access preschool services reduces the comparability of preschool data across jurisdictions. Preschool data are presented for two categories to improve comparability:

- children attending preschool in the year immediately before they commence full time schooling (data that are largely presented on a comparable basis for all jurisdictions)
- younger children attending preschool services.

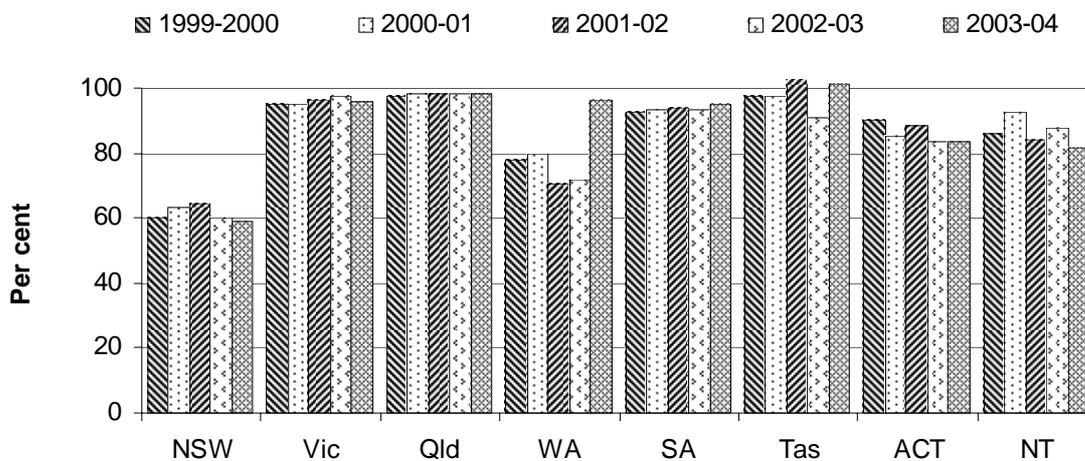
Approximately 246 000 children attended State and Territory funded and/or provided preschool services in 2003-04. The majority (88.6 per cent, or approximately 218 000 children) were to begin full time schooling the following year (tables 14A.26, 14A.35, 14A.44, 14A.53, 14A.62, 14A.71, 14A.80 and 14A.89).

Some jurisdictions differ in their age criterion for access to preschool services; as a result, the following data need to be interpreted with caution. Nationally in 2003-04, 83.7 per cent of children of 4 years of age attended funded and/or provided preschool in the year immediately before they commenced school. This proportion

³ See footnote 2.

ranged from about 100 per cent in Tasmania to 59.1 per cent in NSW. There is some double counting in several jurisdictions, as well as issues with synchronisation of data collection times, leading to overestimation of the attendance rates being reported (figure 14.3).

Figure 14.3 Children in the population who attended State and Territory government funded and/or provided preschool services immediately before the commencement of full time schooling^{a, b, c, d, e, f}



^a The denominator — the population of preschool aged children — is defined as persons aged 4 years in all states and territories. Percentages are distorted by the data for estimated residential population being six months out of sequence with the data for children using State or Territory government funded and/or provided preschool services in year before full time school. Year before full time school includes a number of non-4 year olds. ^b There is some double counting of children in jurisdictions (except in Victoria, SA, Tasmania and the ACT) because some children moved in and out of the preschool system throughout the year and, as a result, the number of children reported in preschool exceeds the number of children in the target population. There is no double counting for Victoria, SA, Tasmania and the ACT because a snapshot is used for each year's data collection (so children appear in only one preschool centre in one year at the time of the snapshot). ^c NSW used a revised method of calculating the number of children receiving child care and preschool services. This new method of calculation will provide clear trend data for each age group for child care and preschool. The data include estimates based on the rate of survey return for each year. NSW data are not comparable with data for other states and territories. ^d Victorian data include some children attending funded preschool services conducted in a centre-based long day care centre. ^e WA data for 1999-2000 to 2002-03 exclude the non-government sector. Data for 2003-04 include the non-government sector for the first time, resulting in a significant jump in the time series. Changes to the school entry age (and the associated move to full time schooling for pre-year 1 children) have resulted in changes in the reporting of data from 2001-02. From 2002, pre-year 1 students in non-compulsory schooling are not included. ^f Data for SA exclude children in non-government preschools.

Source: ABS (unpublished), Cat. no. 3201.0; ABS (unpublished), Cat. no. 3222.0; State and Territory governments (unpublished); tables 14A.1, 14A.26, 14A.35, 14A.44, 14A.53, 14A.62, 14A.71, 14A.80 and 14A.89.

Younger children in NSW, Queensland, SA, the ACT and the NT were able to attend government funded preschool services in 2003-04. Around 17.1 per cent of children aged 3 years attended preschool services in that year (approximately

28 100 children). Participation in 2003-04 differed across jurisdictions, reflecting variation in policies on access to funded preschool services: the proportion was 14.0 per cent in NSW, 21.1 per cent in Queensland, 24.9 per cent in SA (where younger children may attend a pre-entry program for one term in the year before preschool), 4.0 per cent in the ACT and 13.7 per cent in the NT (tables 14A.1, 14A.26, 14A.44, 14A.62, 14A.80 and 14A.89).

All jurisdictions except NSW and Victoria provided data on the average hours of attendance for government funded and/or provided preschool services in 2003-04. The average attendance of children in the year immediately before they commenced full time schooling ranged from 14.0 hours per week in Queensland to 10.5 hours per week in Tasmania (tables 14A.43, 14A.52, 14A.61, 14A.70, 14A.79 and 14A.88).

Employment status of parents

Access to children's services differs according to the service type. The workforce and employment status of parents are factors that may influence children's access to services. Those services eligible for Child Care Benefit, for example, gave a high priority to children at risk and children of parents with work-related child care needs. Occasional care gives priority to parents requiring care to meet other requirements (such as to attend appointments, take care of personal matters or have temporary respite from full time parenting). Details of the labour force and employment status of parents whose children use these services are shown in table 14A.13.

Services by management type

Children's services are managed by the government (State, Territory and local), community and private sectors. The management structure of services indicates the involvement of these sectors in the direct delivery of children's services. The limited data on the management type of child care need to be interpreted with care because the scope of the data collection varies across jurisdictions. Available data on the management type of preschool services in 2003-04, although more complete, also indicate considerable variation across jurisdictions (table 14.2).

Table 14.2 Proportion of State and Territory licensed and/or registered children's services, by management type, 2003-04 (per cent)^a

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic^b</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas^c</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT^d</i>
Child care								
Community managed ^e	33.1	39.2	26.0	25.1	40.3	58.8	84.2	77.4
Private ^f	63.5	45.9	70.5	70.9	33.7	18.4	15.8	22.6
Government managed	3.4	14.9	3.5	4.0	26.0	22.8	–	na
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Preschool								
Community managed ^e	90.0	74.5	22.9	na	4.7	..	8.0	4.3
Private ^f	10.0	8.4	21.8	na	–	22.7	–	na
Government managed	na	17.2	55.3	100.0	95.3	77.3	92.0	95.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

^a Includes all Australian, State and Territory government supported services. Most services receive both Australian Government and State/Territory funding. ^b All government managed preschools in Victoria are managed by local government. ^c Preschools include funded non-government preschools. ^d Preschool services are provided by the Department of Education directly, but a range of management functions are devolved to school councils and parent management committees. ^e Community managed services include not-for-profit services provided or managed by parents, churches or co-operatives. ^f Private for-profit services provided or managed by a company, private individual or non-government school. **na** Not available. **..** Not applicable. **–** Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); tables 14A.29, 14A.38, 14A.47, 14A.56, 14A.65, 14A.74, 14A.83 and 14A.92.

14.2 Framework of performance indicators

The framework of performance indicators is based on common objectives for children's services which the Community Services and Disabilities Ministers' Advisory Council (CSDMAC) endorsed (box 14.1). The relative emphasis placed on each objective varies across jurisdictions.

Box 14.1 Objectives for children's services

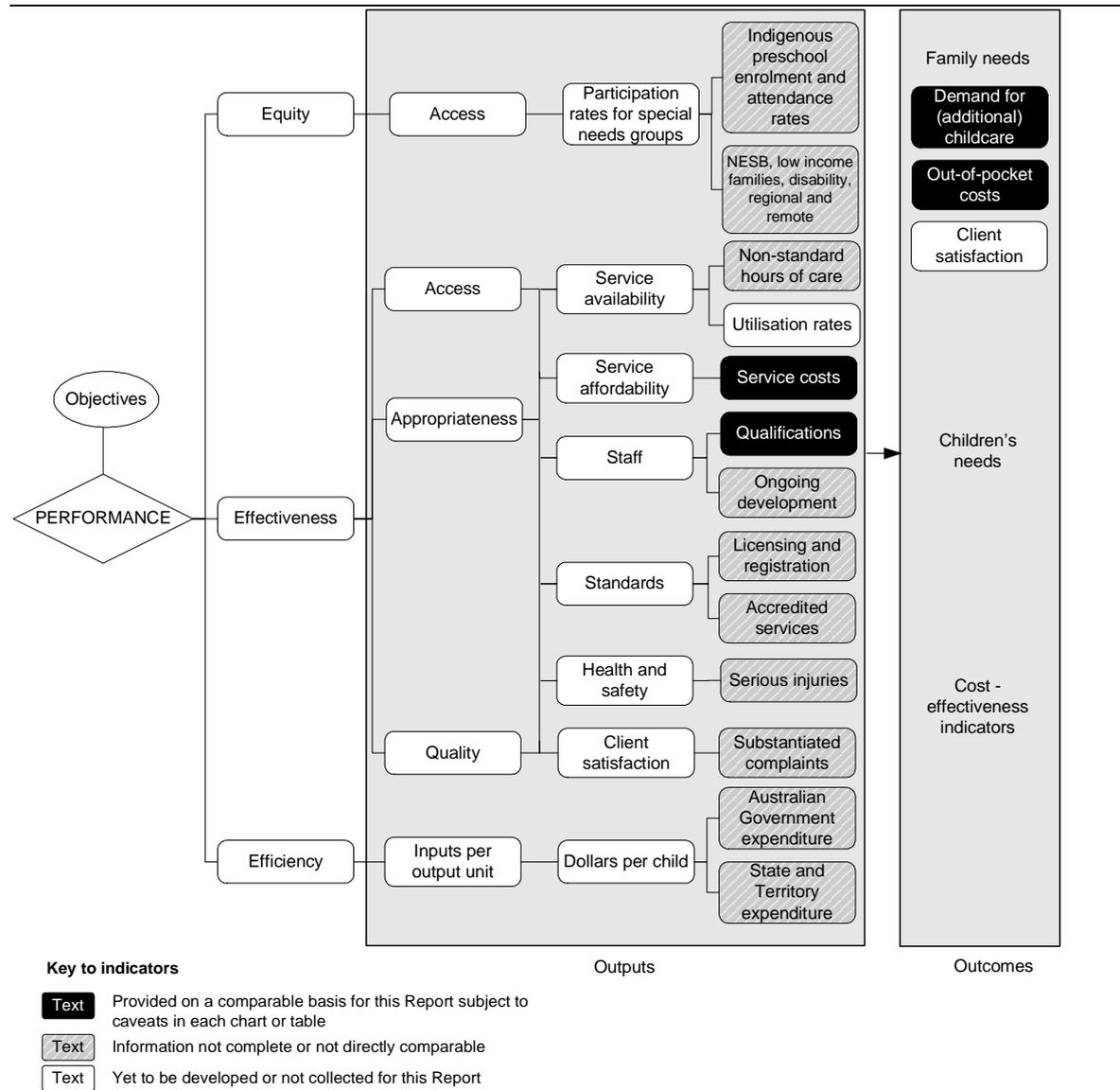
Children's services aim to:

- meet the care, education and development needs of children in a safe and nurturing environment
- provide support for families in caring for their children
- provide these services in an equitable and efficient manner.

A performance indicator framework consistent with these objectives is summarised in figure 14.4. The framework shows which data are provided on a comparable basis in the 2005 Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, the

text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. Chapter 1 discusses data comparability from a Report-wide perspective (see section 1.6).

Figure 14.4 Performance indicators for children’s services



14.3 Key performance indicator results

Different delivery contexts, locations and types of client may affect the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of children’s services. Most of the data available for reporting in this chapter are not comparable across jurisdictions. Appendix A contains contextual information, which may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. Definitions of key terms and indicators are in section 14.6.

Outputs

Equity

Access — participation rates for special needs groups

The 'participation rates for special needs groups' indicator is explained in box 14.2.

Box 14.2 Participation rates for special needs groups

'Participation rates for special needs groups' are included as an output (equity — access) indicator of governments' objective to ensure that all Australian families have equitable access to child care and preschool services, that there is no discrimination between groups, and that there is consideration of the needs of those groups who may have special difficulty accessing services.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of children using child care services who are from targeted special needs groups, compared with the representation of these groups in the community. Data are reported separately for child care and preschool services. Targeted special needs groups include children from a non-English speaking background, children from an Indigenous background, children from low income families, children with a disability and children from regional and remote areas.

The representation of special needs groups among children's services users would be expected to be broadly similar to their representation in the community.

The data indicate that the representation of children in special needs groups among users of Australian Government supported child care is sometimes substantially different across jurisdictions. This variation largely reflects jurisdictional differences in the representation of children from special needs groups in the community (table 14.3).

The proportion of children using child care services in 2004 who were from a non-English speaking background (NESB) ranged from 17.3 per cent in NSW (where representation of NESB children in the population was 8.8 per cent) to 3.4 per cent in Tasmania (where the representation of NESB children in the population was 1.1 per cent). Nationally, the representation of NESB children among child care users was higher than this group's overall representation in the community (table 14.3).

The proportion of children using child care services in 2004 who were from an Indigenous background ranged up to 11.0 per cent in the NT (where the representation of Indigenous children in the population was 36.7 per cent).

Nationally, the representation of children from an Indigenous background among child care users was lower than this group's overall representation in the community (table 14.3).

Table 14.3 Proportion of children (aged 0–12 years) from special needs groups attending Australian Government approved child care services, 2004 (per cent)

<i>Representation</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Children from non-English speaking backgrounds									
In child care services	17.3	13.5	6.3	8.0	6.7	3.4	12.0	8.4	11.6
In the community ^{a, b}	8.8	8.0	2.7	3.6	3.0	1.1	2.1	4.1	6.1
Children from Indigenous backgrounds									
In child care services	1.6	0.5	2.4	1.7	1.3	1.0	0.7	11.0	1.6
In the community ^{c, d}	3.6	1.0	5.9	5.8	3.1	6.4	2.1	36.7	4.1
Children from low-income families									
In child care services	27.3	27.5	32.6	31.7	32.2	31.1	11.9	18.5	29.1
In the community ^e	23.3	21.2	24.7	25.2	30.8	26.7	10.3	24.1	23.7
Children with a disability									
In child care services	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.7	3.5	2.2	2.0	2.4	2.2
In the community ^f	8.6	7.2	7.9	9.2	9.9	7.3	7.2	na	8.2
Children from regional and remote areas									
Children from regional areas									
In child care services	25.7	22.5	38.7	18.4	16.1	99.5	–	72.6	28.7
In the community ^{a, d}	30.0	29.1	45.6	24.0	26.9	97.6	0.3	48.9	33.4
Children from remote areas									
In child care services	0.4	0.1	1.5	5.0	1.9	0.5	..	27.4	1.4
In the community ^{a, d}	0.8	0.1	4.7	9.2	4.8	2.4	..	51.1	3.2

^a Data for 1999-2000 to 2002-03 relate to children aged 0–14 years at June 2001 and were obtained from the ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing. Data for 2003-04 relate to children aged 0–11 years and were obtained from the ABS 2002 Survey of Child Care. These data are not strictly comparable to the proportion of children from a non-English speaking background using the services. ^b Estimates for the smaller jurisdictions are based on small sample sizes and are consequently subject to high sampling error. Data for Tasmania, the ACT and the NT, in particular, need to be interpreted with caution. ^c Data relate to children aged 0–14 years at June 2001 and were obtained from the ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing. ^d These numbers do not include innovative or flexible services that receive direct funding from the Australian Government and are targeted towards children from these groups. ^e Data relate to children aged 0–12 years and were obtained from the ABS 1999-2000 Survey of Income and Housing. ^f Data are estimated from the ABS 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers and relate to children aged 0–14 years, and are thus not strictly comparable to the proportion of child care service users with a disability. **na** Not available. – Nil or rounded to zero. .. Not applicable.

Source: AGCCCS (unpublished); ABS (unpublished) 1999-2000 Survey of Income and Housing; ABS (unpublished) 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers; ABS (unpublished) 2002 Child Care Survey; table 14A.17.

The representation of children from low income families among attendees of Australian Government supported child care in 2003 ranged from 32.6 per cent in

Queensland (where their representation in the population was 24.7 per cent) to 11.9 per cent in the ACT (where their representation in the population was 10.3 per cent) (table 14.3). Nationally, the representation of children from low income families among child care users was greater than this group's representation in the community.

The proportion of child care attendees with a disability in 2004 varied from 3.5 per cent in SA (where the representation of children with a disability in the community was 9.9 per cent) to 1.7 per cent in WA (where the representation in the community was 9.2 per cent). Across all jurisdictions for which data were available, the representation of children with a disability among child care users was lower than their overall representation in the community (table 14.3).

The proportion of child care attendees from regional areas in 2004 ranged from 99.5 per cent in Tasmanian (where the representation of children from regional areas in the community was 97.6 per cent) to 16.1 per cent in SA (where the representation in the community was 26.9 per cent) (excluding the ACT, which has an extremely small regional population) (table 14.3).

In all jurisdictions except SA and the NT, the proportion of child care attendees from regional areas was within 7 percentage points of this group's representation among children aged 0–12 years in the community. In SA, the proportion of child care attendees from regional areas was 10.8 percentage points below this group's representation in the community, while in the NT it was 23.7 percentage points above (table 14.3).

The proportion of child care attendees from remote areas in 2004 ranged from 27.4 per cent in the NT (where the representation of children from remote areas in the community was 51.1 per cent) to less than 2 per cent in all other jurisdictions except WA (where the representation in the community was 5.0 per cent) and the ACT (which has no remote areas) (table 14.3). In all jurisdictions except the NT, the proportion of child care attendees from remote areas was within 4.5 percentage points of this group's representation among children aged 0–12 years in the community (table 14.3).

Data on the proportion of preschool attendees from the specified special needs groups are less extensive for all jurisdictions. Across jurisdictions, the proportion of preschool attendees in 2003-04 who were Indigenous was broadly similar to the representation of Indigenous children in the community (table 14.4).

The proportion of preschool attendees from Indigenous backgrounds has been relatively constant over time within jurisdictions, except in the NT, where it has increased steadily since 1999-2000 (figure 14.5). Data on the representation of other

special needs groups among government funded preschool attendees are provided in table 14.4.

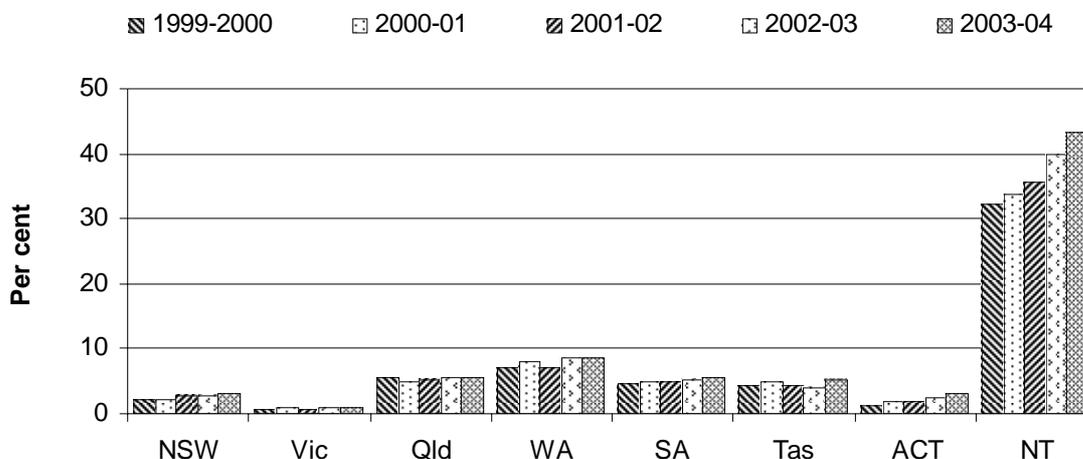
Table 14.4 Proportion of children (aged 0–12 years) from special needs groups attending State and Territory funded or provided preschools, 2003-04 (per cent)

<i>Representation</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Children from non-English speaking backgrounds									
In preschool services	6.6	13.5	1.0	na	9.3	na	7.5	na	6.2
In the community ^{a, b}	8.8	8.0	2.7	3.6	3.0	1.1	2.1	4.1	6.1
Children from Indigenous backgrounds									
In preschool services	3.0	0.9	5.6	8.7	5.5	5.3	2.9	43.1	4.5
In the community ^{c, d}	3.6	1.0	5.9	5.8	3.1	6.4	2.1	36.7	4.1
Children with a disability									
In preschool services	6.8	3.7	1.4	2.5	14.3	na	4.6	5.9	4.7
In the community ^e	8.6	7.2	7.9	9.2	9.9	7.3	7.2	na	8.2
Children from regional and remote areas									
Children from regional areas									
In preschool services	32.2	29.3	na	23.5	29.1	98.6	0.9	na	23.1
In the community ^d	30.0	29.1	45.6	24.0	26.9	97.6	0.3	48.9	33.4
Children from remote areas									
In preschool services	1.2	0.1	na	9.9	5.7	1.4	..	na	1.9
In the community ^d	0.8	0.1	4.7	9.2	4.8	2.4	..	51.1	3.2

^a Data for 1999-2000 to 2002-03 relate to children aged 0–14 years at June 2001 and were obtained from the ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing. Data for 2003-04 relate to children aged 0–11 years and were obtained from the ABS 2002 Survey of Child Care. These data are not strictly comparable to the proportion of children from a non-English speaking background using the services. ^b Estimates for the smaller jurisdictions are based on small sample sizes and are consequently subject to high sampling error. Data for Tasmania, the ACT and the NT, in particular, need to be interpreted with caution. ^c Data relate to children aged 0–14 years at June 2001 and were obtained from the ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing. ^d These numbers do not include innovative or flexible services that receive direct funding from the Australian Government and are targeted towards children from these groups. ^e Data are estimated from the ABS 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers and relate to children aged 0–14 years, and are thus not strictly comparable to the proportion of preschool users with a disability. **na** Not available. **..** Not applicable.

Source: ABS (2001); State and Territory governments (unpublished); tables 14A.30, 14A.39, 14A.48 14A.57, 14A.66, 14A.75, 14A.84 and 14A.93.

Figure 14.5 Preschool attendees from Indigenous backgrounds



Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); tables 14A.30, 14A.39, 14A.48, 14A.57, 14A.66, 14A.75, 14A.84 and 14A.93.

Effectiveness

Service availability — non-standard hours of care

An indicator of the appropriateness of, and community access to, children’s services is the proportion of services offering ‘non-standard hours of care’ (box 14.3). What constitutes non-standard hours varies across service types, and a full explanation can be found in the definitions section (14.6).

Box 14.3 Non-standard hours of care

The prevalence of services providing ‘non-standard hours of care’ is included as an output (service availability) indicator of governments’ objective to ensure government funded and/or provided children’s services meet the needs of all users.

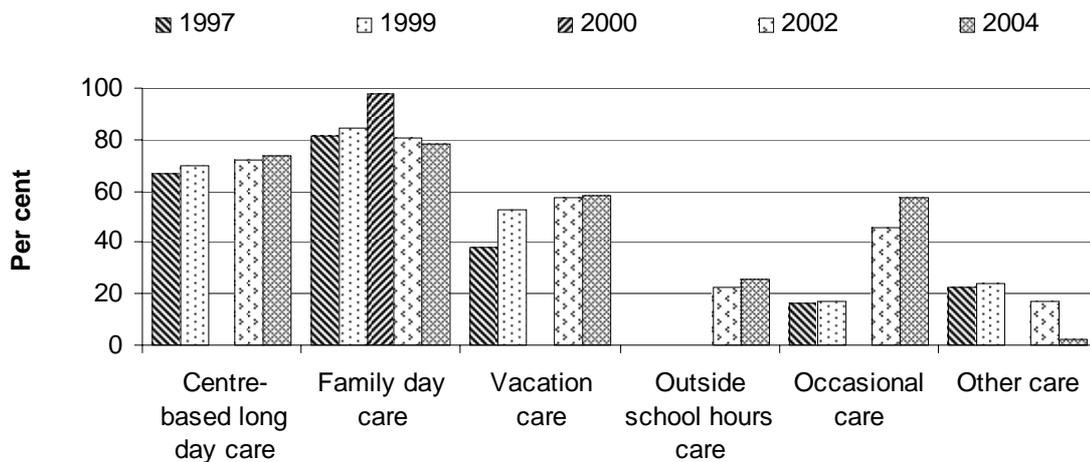
This indicator is defined as the number of services providing non-standard hours of care divided by the total number of services. Data are reported by service type.

A higher proportion of services providing non-standard hours of care may suggest a greater flexibility of services to meet the needs of families.

This indicator does not provide information on the demand for non-standard hours of care. It also provides no information on how closely these non-standard hours services match the needs of users.

Nationally, 78.0 per cent of family day care services provided non-standard hours of care in 2004. Centre-based long day care had the next highest proportion of services providing non-standard hours of care (73.7 per cent), followed by vacation care (58.1 per cent), occasional care (57.1 per cent) and outside school hours care (25.2 per cent) (figure 14.6).

Figure 14.6 **Australian Government approved child care services providing non-standard hours of care, by service type^{a, b}**



^a Only family day care data can be reported for 2000. ^b Comparison between 2000 data and data for other years is not possible, given different data collection methods and time frames.

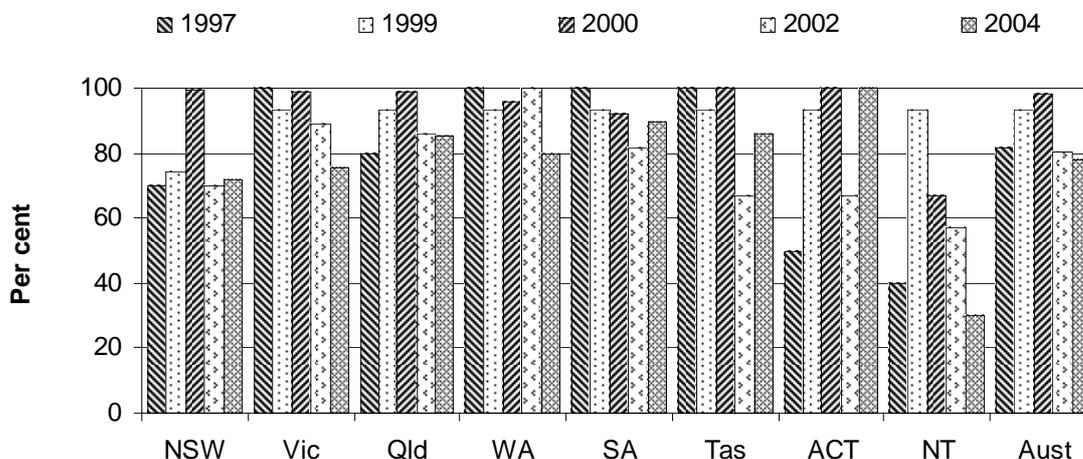
Source: AGCCCS, August 1997, May 1999, May 2002 and March 2004 (unpublished); Centrelink administrative data, August 2000 (unpublished); table 14A.14.

In the ACT, 100 per cent of family day care schemes offered non-standard hours in 2004. In all other jurisdictions, less than 90 per cent of these schemes offered non-standard hours of care (figure 14.7).

Limited data are available on services not included in the Australian Government Census of Child Care Services (AGCCCS) that were offering non-standard hours of care. New South Wales, SA and the ACT were able to provide data on the proportion of their preschools that offered non-standard hours in 2003-04: 70.1 per cent in NSW (table 14A.66), 70.9 per cent in SA (table 14A.30)⁴ and no preschools in the ACT (table 14A.84).

⁴ In SA, preschools are encouraged to offer back-to-back preschool services to assist parents, particularly in country regions where the need to travel long distances makes it impractical for children to attend preschool more frequently (see footnotes to table 14A.66).

Figure 14.7 Australian Government approved family day care services providing non-standard hours of care^a



^a Comparison between 2000 data and data for other years is not possible, given different data collection methods and time frames.

Source: AGCCCS, August 1997, May 1999, May 2002 and March 2004 (unpublished); Centrelink administrative data, August 2000 (unpublished); table 14A.14.

Service availability — utilisation rates

The Steering Committee has identified ‘utilisation rates’ as an indicator of the effectiveness of children’s services (box 14.4). Data for this indicator, however, were not available for the 2005 Report.

Box 14.4 Utilisation rates

This indicator will provide an output (service availability) indicator of governments’ objective to ensure all Australian families have equitable and adequate access to children’s services.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

Service affordability — service costs

An indicator of the affordability (and thus accessibility) of children’s services is the ‘service cost’, represented by average weekly fees (box 14.5). Nationally, average weekly fees for 50 hours of care in 2004 were higher for centre-based long day care services (\$210 per week) than for family day care services (\$186 per week) (table

14A.23). Across jurisdictions, average weekly fees for centre-based long day care ranged from \$227 per week in the ACT to \$183 per week in the NT. For family day care, the average ranged from \$217 per week in the ACT to \$175 per week in both Queensland and the NT (figure 14.8).

Box 14.5 Service costs

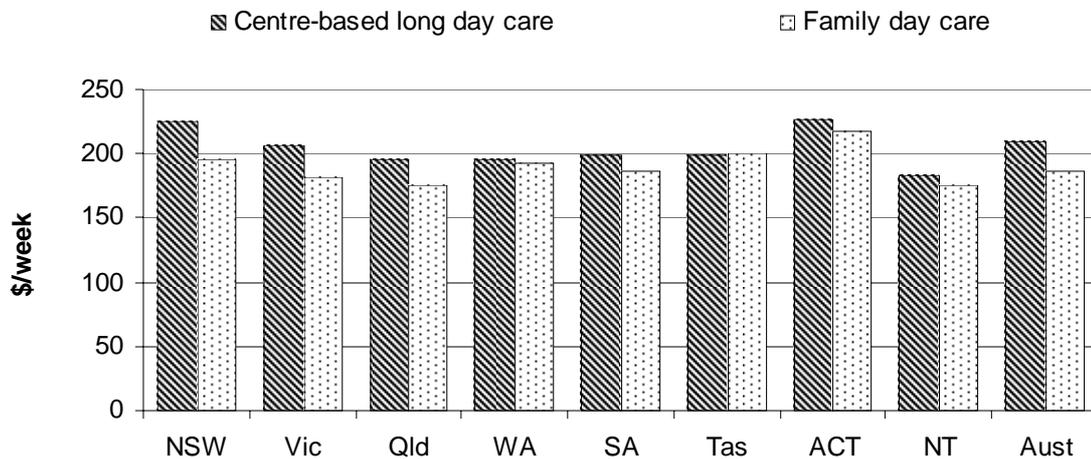
This indicator is included as an output (service affordability) indicator of governments' objective to ensure all Australian families have equitable access to children's services regardless of their financial circumstances.

This indicator is defined as average weekly fees for 50 hours of care by service type.

Provided the service quality is held constant, lower service costs are more desirable.

Fee data need to be interpreted with care because fees are independently set by service providers. Charging practices, including fees, are commercial decisions made by individual services, so there is significant variation in the fees charged by services. Fee variation occurs as a result of factors including State and Territory licensing requirements, award wages, and whether fees include charges for additional services such as nappies and meals.

Figure 14.8 Average fees charged by Australian Government funded child care services, 2004^a



^a Average fees based on 50 hours of care in the Census reference week.

Source: AGCCCS, March 2004 (unpublished); table 14A.23.

Quality

An important focus of Australian, State and Territory governments is to set and maintain appropriate quality standards in child care and preschool services.

Indicators of the quality of children's services are the proportion of qualified staff, the rate of ongoing staff development, the extent of licensing and registration, the proportion of services that have achieved accreditation, the number of serious injuries, and the number of substantiated complaints per registered or licensed service, by service type. These data need to be treated with caution because there are differences in reporting among jurisdictions.

Staff — qualifications

Staff qualifications are an important indicator of staff quality (box 14.6).

Box 14.6 Qualifications

The qualifications of staff in children's services is included as an output (staff) indicator of governments' objective to ensure staff in government funded or provided children's services are able to provide services which meet the needs of children. In particular, this means ensuring staff have the training and experience to provide a safe and nurturing environment that fulfils the educational and development needs of children.

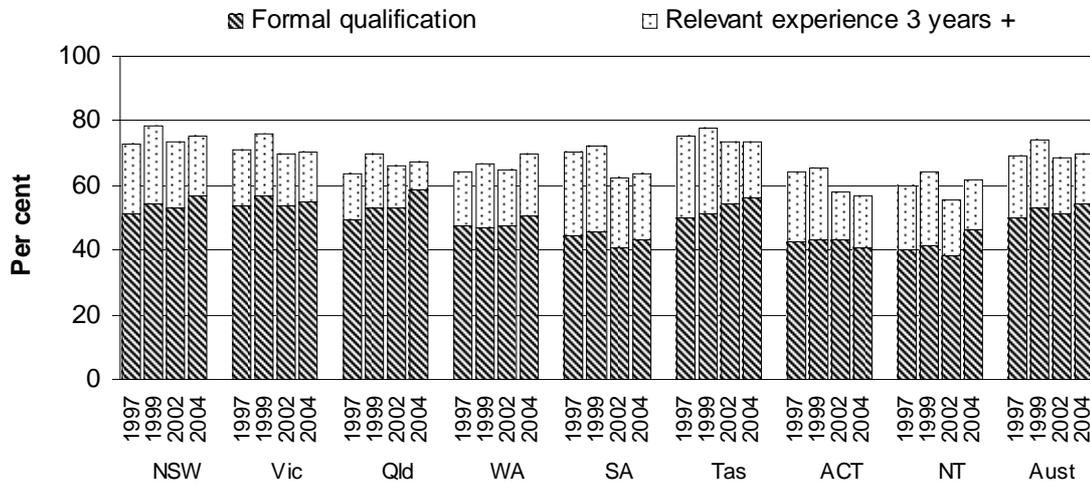
This indicator is defined as the proportion of primary contact staff with relevant formal qualifications or three or more years of relevant experience.

Some studies and research have shown a link between a higher proportion of qualified and experienced primary contact staff and a higher quality service.

Nationally, the proportion of primary contact staff with formal qualifications in Australian Government approved child care was 54.6 per cent in 2004. A further 15.4 per cent had no formal qualifications but three or more years of relevant experience (figure 14.9). Across jurisdictions, the proportion of staff with either a formal qualification or three or more years of relevant experience ranged from 75.2 per cent in NSW to 56.6 per cent in the ACT in 2004. Between 1997 and 2004, this proportion increased in NSW, Queensland and WA, remained relatively constant in Victoria and the NT, and declined in all other jurisdictions (figure 14.9).

Some data are available on the qualifications of staff employed by preschool services that received funding from State and Territory governments. The comparability of these data is limited, however, by the different licensing and funding arrangements across jurisdictions. Across those jurisdictions for which 2003-04 data are available, the proportion of staff in preschool services with relevant formal qualifications ranged from 68.6 per cent in the NT to 46.4 per cent in Victoria (figure 14.10).

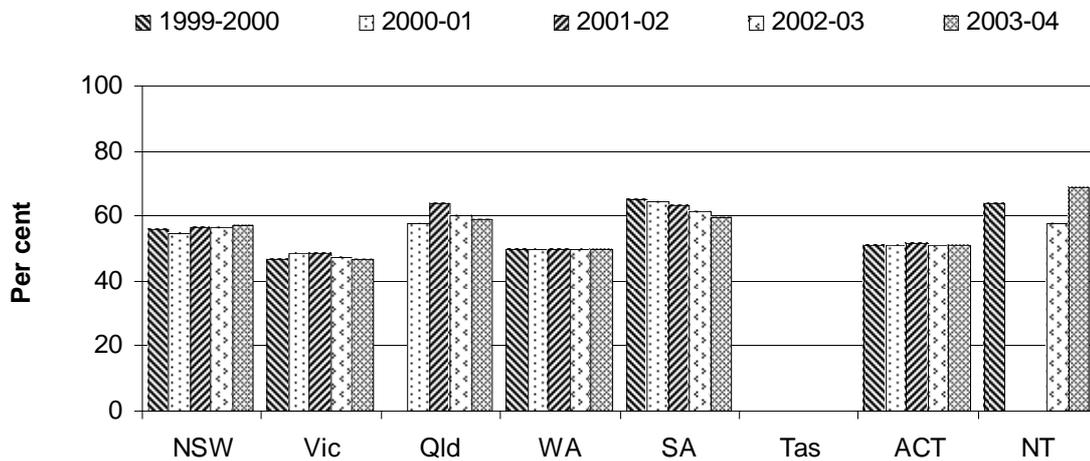
Figure 14.9 **Paid primary contact staff employed by Australian Government approved child care services, by qualification, 2004^{a, b}**



^a Excludes Aboriginal play groups, mobile and toy libraries, and in-home care. ^b 'Three or more years relevant experience' category excludes staff with a relevant formal qualification.

Source: AGCCCS, March 2004 (unpublished); table 14A.11.

Figure 14.10 **Paid primary contact staff with a relevant formal qualification employed by State/Territory funded and/or managed preschools^a**



^a All funded preschool services in Victoria must have at least two staff but only the preschool teacher must be qualified. Preschools in Queensland must have at least two staff, of whom one must have a relevant formal qualification.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); tables 14A.28, 14A.37, 14A.46, 14A.55, 14A.64, 14A.73, 14A.82 and 14A.91.

Staff — ongoing development

Ongoing development of the skills and competencies of child care and preschool staff is an important indicator of staff quality (box 14.7). The number of staff who undertook relevant in-service training in the previous 12 months is reported in figure 14.11. It includes formal training only — that is, structured training sessions conducted either in-house or externally.

Box 14.7 Ongoing development

The ongoing development of staff in children's services is included as an output (staff) indicator of governments' objective to ensure staff in government funded or provided children's services are able to provide services that meet the needs of children. In particular, this means ensuring staff have the training and experience to provide a safe and nurturing environment that fulfils the educational and development needs of children.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of staff who undertook relevant in-service training in the previous 12 months.

A high rate of in-service training suggests a relatively high quality of service.

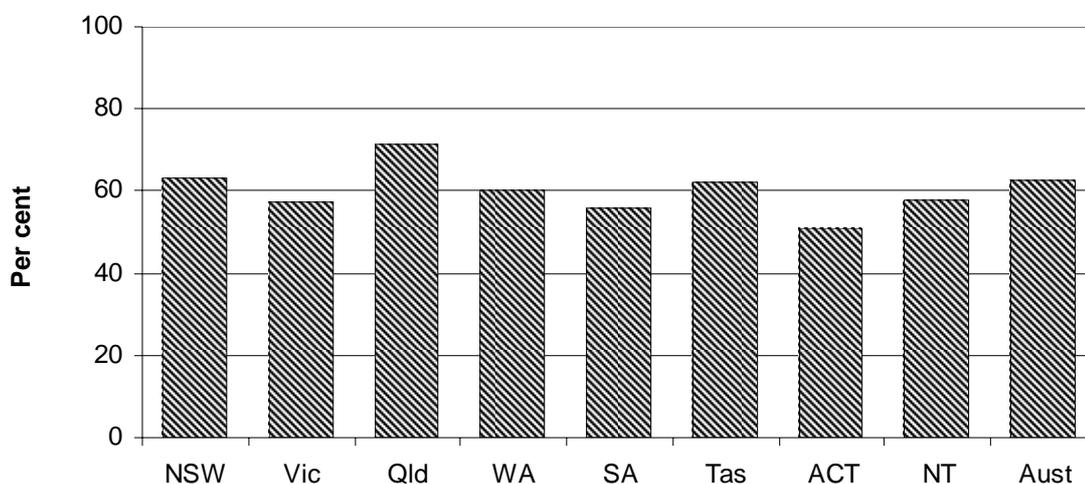
This indicator does not provide information on whether the ongoing development undertaken by staff is adequate or sufficiently relevant to improve the quality of the service provided.

For 2004, Queensland reported the highest level of child care staff having undertaken in-service training in the previous 12 months (71.5 per cent) and the ACT reported the lowest (50.9 per cent) (figure 14.11).

Standards

The Australian Government and the State and Territory governments are active in maintaining the quality of care provided by children's services by setting quality standards. The mechanisms used to maintain quality are accreditation, licensing, the measurement of performance against standards, and funding linked to outcomes. These mechanisms are used in addition to the provision of curriculum and policy support and advice, and the training and development of management and staff.

Figure 14.11 **Staff in Australian Government child care services who undertook relevant in-service training in previous 12 months, 2004^a**



^a Excludes Aboriginal play groups, mobile and toy libraries, and in-home care.

Source: AGCCCS, March 2004 (unpublished); table 14A.12.

Standards — licensing and registration

State and Territory governments are responsible for licensing children’s services in their jurisdiction (box 14.8).

Box 14.8 Licensing and registration

‘Licensing and registration’ is included as an output (standards) indicator of governments’ objective to ensure government funded or provided children’s services meet the minimum standards considered necessary to provide a safe and nurturing environment, and to meet the educational and development needs of children.

Data are currently not reported on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future. Descriptive information is reported for some jurisdictions as an interim measure. This information includes the number of licensed services, and whether jurisdictions have incorporated the national standards for centre-based child care, family day care and outside school hours care into the licensing requirements.

A higher proportion of licensed services is desirable.

This indicator does not provide information on the degree to which licensing and registration translates into higher quality service outcomes above the minimum standards of care.

State and Territory governments also undertake activities aimed at the promotion of quality, such as publishing curriculum materials and other resources, and undertaking consumer education. The types of service covered by legislation vary across jurisdictions, as do the standards that apply (table 14.5).

Table 14.5 State and Territory licensing and registration of child care services, 2004

<i>Service type</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>
Long day care ^a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Occasional care ^a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family day care schemes ^b	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Family day care carers ^c	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	x
Outside school-hours care ^{b, d}	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x
Other/home-based care ^e	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x

^a In the ACT, licensed as centre-based children's services. ^b Legislation requiring licensing of services commenced on 1 September 2003 in Tasmania, but does not take effect until early 2005. ^c Family day care providers in NSW and WA are individually licensed. Family day carers in Queensland, SA and Tasmania are not required to be licensed, provided they are registered through a family day care scheme. Legislation requiring licensing of services commenced on 1 September 2003 in WA; services have until 31 August 2005 to apply for a licence. ^d On the introduction of the regulations in WA on 28 August 2003, existing service providers became registered to be licensed; by 28 August 2005, all service providers must be licensed. ^e Includes baby sitting agencies in SA. Includes playschools and independent preschools in the ACT.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished).

State and Territory licensing requirements establish the foundations for quality of care by stipulating enforceable standards to support the health, safety, welfare and developmental needs of children in formal child care settings. Accreditation of services is built on this platform.

Licensed children's services may include centre-based long day care, occasional care, preschools, family day care and outside school hours care. Australian, State and Territory governments have developed national standards for centre-based long day care, family day care and outside school hours care. Jurisdictions refer to these standards when writing regulations. The extent of implementation of these standards varies across Australia.

Standards — accredited services

The NCAC administers quality assurance systems for long day care centres, family day care schemes and outside school hours care services across Australia (box 14.9).

Box 14.9 Accredited services

'Accredited services' is included as an output (standards) indicator of governments' objective to ensure government funded or provided children's services meet the minimum standards considered necessary to provide a safe and nurturing environment, and to meet the educational and development needs of children. Accredited services have been independently evaluated against a series of national quality standards for the specific child care service type.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of child care services participating in the quality assurance systems that are accredited by NCAC. Data are reported for centre-based long day care services, family day care schemes and outside school hours care services.

A higher proportion of centres that have been accredited is more desirable.

This indicator does not provide information on the degree to which accreditation translates into higher quality service outcomes.

The Australian Government also funds resource and advisory services across Australia to assist services participating in the quality assurance systems. State and Territory government initiatives include quality assurance or improvement systems for government preschools (SA and Victoria) and non-government preschools (Queensland). Some other jurisdictions are exploring similar systems.

The QIAS for long day child care centres commenced in 1994 and was revised in January 2002. Family Day Care Quality Assurance was introduced on 1 July 2001. Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance commenced on 1 July 2003.

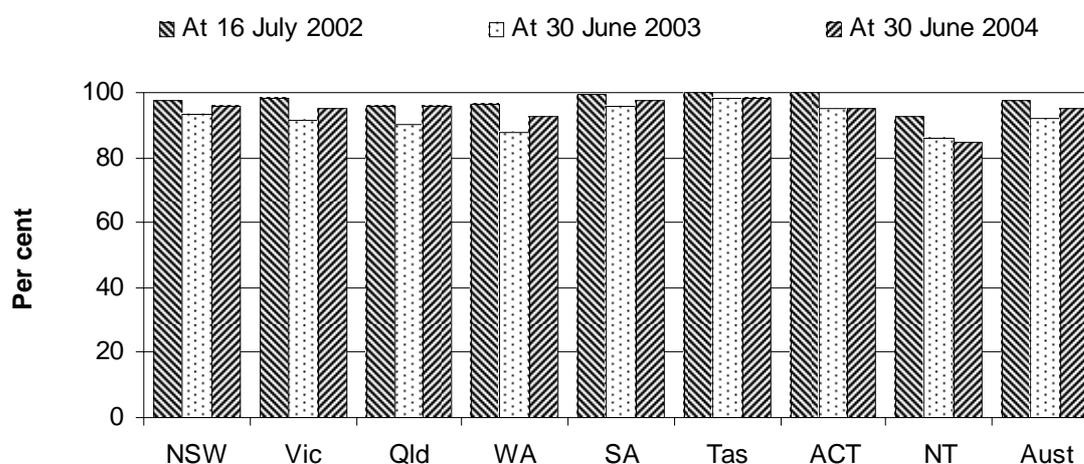
Long day child care services participating in the QIAS receive a 'quality profile' as part of their accreditation decision, which details their performance against the following ten 'quality areas':

- relationships with children
- respect for children
- partnerships with families
- staff interactions
- planning and evaluation
- learning and development
- protective care
- health
- safety
- managing to support quality.

The NCAC accreditation systems are Australian Government initiatives linked to Child Care Benefit funding. All centre-based long day child care services are required to participate in the QIAS to receive Child Care Benefit, so the majority of all centre-based long day child care services do participate.

Nationally, 4473 centres were registered to participate in the QIAS at 30 June 2004. Of the 4039 centres that had received an accreditation decision at 30 June 2004, 95.2 per cent (3845) were successful in achieving accreditation. This proportion varied from 98.2 per cent in Tasmania to 84.4 per cent in the NT. The relatively small number of services in these jurisdictions, however, may unduly influence the results (figure 14.12).

Figure 14.12 **Accredited centres as a proportion of centres fully assessed under the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System^{a, b}**



^a Figures may change daily and are updated every six weeks following an NCAC meeting. ^b Results for Tasmania, the ACT and the NT may be unduly influenced by the relatively small number of services (54, 77 and 38 respectively at 30 June 2004) participating in the process.

Source: NCAC (unpublished); table 14A.2.

At 30 June 2004, a further 434 centres were in self-study, review or moderation, or awaiting an accreditation decision (9.7 per cent). Some 194 centres were not accredited (4.3 per cent) (table 14A.2). Centres that do not meet accreditation standards are required to submit another self study report to NCAC within six months of the date of NCAC's accreditation decision.

Self-study reports from family day care schemes were submitted from July 2002, with 299 schemes accredited at 30 June 2004 (table 14A.2). Family day care schemes also receive a quality profile, which details their performance against the following six quality areas:

- interactions
- physical environments
- children's experiences, learning and development
- health, hygiene, nutrition, safety and wellbeing
- carers and coordination unit staff
- management and administration.

The quality standards (detailed in NCAC 2001) were revised in 2004 based on feedback and consultation with family day care schemes. The revised standards (detailed in NCAC 2004) come into effect from 1 January 2005.

All services providing before school, after school and vacation care were required to register with NCAC by 30 September 2003. Each registered outside school hours care service is required to submit a self-study report to the NCAC between July 2004 and December 2006.

Outside school hours care services receive a quality profile, which details their performance against the following eight quality areas:

- respect for children
- staff interactions and relationships with children
- managing to support quality
- programming and evaluation
- play and development
- health, nutrition and wellbeing
- protective care and safety
- partnerships with families and community links.

There were 2656 outside school hours care services registered at 30 June 2004 to participate in OSHCQA (table 14A.2). Accreditation data for this sector are expected to be available for inclusion in the 2006 Report.

Health and safety — serious injuries

‘Serious injuries’ is an important indicator of child care services’ success in providing a safe environment (box 14.10).

Box 14.10 Serious injuries

‘Serious injuries’ is included as an output (health and safety) indicator of governments’ objective to ensure children’s services provide high quality care that meets the care, educational and development needs of children in a safe and nurturing environment.

This indicator is defined as the number of serious injuries per registered or licensed service provider. A serious injury is defined as an injury requiring hospitalisation or a visit to, or by, a doctor.

A low injury rate may indicate a high level of safety.

A higher rate of injury does not provide information on whether a jurisdiction has lower service safety and quality, or a more effective reporting and monitoring regime.

Data on the number of serious injuries and the number of serious injuries per registered or licensed service provider were limited for 2003-04. Although all jurisdictions except SA and Tasmania could provide some information, the small

incident numbers and the differences in data collection approaches mean direct comparisons across jurisdictions are problematic. Tables 14A.31, 14A.40, 14A.49, 14A.58, 14A.85 and 14A.94 provide a breakdown of the available information for each jurisdiction.

Client satisfaction — substantiated complaints

‘Substantiated complaints’ is an important indicator of community satisfaction with child care services (box 14.11). All jurisdictions except NSW and SA provided data on the number of substantiated complaints and allegations of regulation breaches made to the State and Territory government regulatory bodies in 2003-04 (tables 14A.32, 14A.41, 14A.50, 14A.59, 14A.68, 14A.77, 14A.86 and 14A.95).

Box 14.11 Substantiated complaints

‘Substantiated complaints’ is an output (client satisfaction) indicator of governments’ objective to ensure government funded or provided children’s services meet the needs and expectations of users.

This indicator is defined as the number of substantiated complaints per service divided by the total number of registered or licensed services. Results are presented by service type. Data on the proportion of substantiated complaints against which action was taken are also reported.

A higher rate of complaints may suggest a lower quality service.

Complaints data need to be interpreted with care.

- Some jurisdictions give priority to developing client groups who are well informed, as part of improving their service delivery. Clients who are well informed may be more likely to make a complaint than are clients without access to this information.
- The number of approved care providers or parent users per service differs in each service across states and territories.
- Complaints management systems vary across jurisdictions. In SA, for example, the Department of Education and Children’s Services is the sole sponsor of family day care and deals with all complaints that may be managed at a scheme level in other states and territories and, as such, may not be reported.

Efficiency

Differences in the indicator results across jurisdictions may reflect differences in counting and reporting rules for financial data and in reported expenditure, which are partly due to different treatments of various expenditure items. Information on the comparability of the expenditure is shown in table 14A.5.

The level of government input per unit of output(s) (unit costs) is a proxy indicator of efficiency. The indicators used here are:

- Australian Government total expenditure on children’s services per child aged 0–12 years in Australia (box 14.12)
- State and Territory government total expenditure on children’s services per child aged 0–12 years in the relevant jurisdiction (box 14.13).

Data were sought from all governments on their expenditure by service type. Incomplete data and changes in collection method, however, make it difficult to compare expenditure across jurisdictions and over time. Unit cost data for children’s services do not yet contain an estimate of user cost of capital.

Inputs per output unit — Australian Government expenditure (dollars per child)

Box 14.12 Australian Government expenditure

‘Australian Government expenditure’ is included as an output (efficiency) indicator of governments’ objective to maximise the availability and quality of services through the efficient use of taxpayer resources.

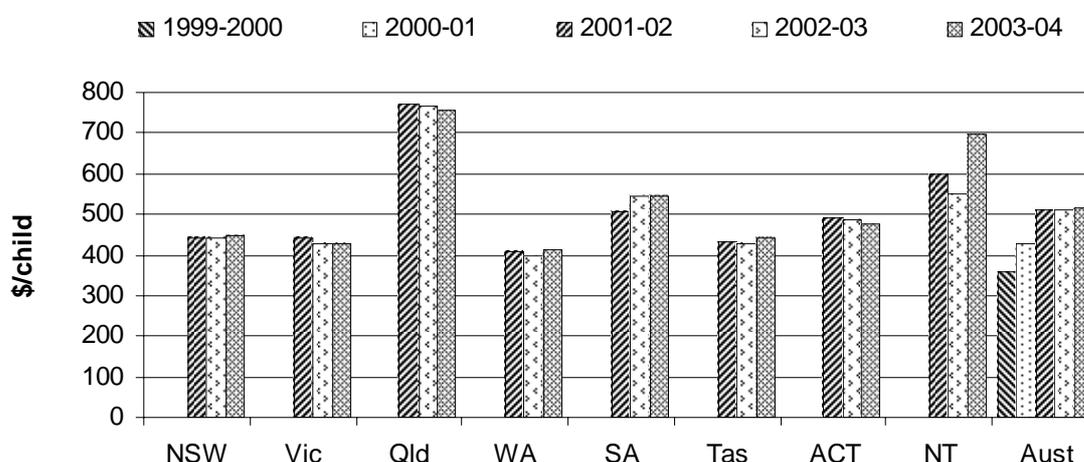
This indicator is defined as Australian Government expenditure on children’s services per child aged 0–12 years in Australia.

Provided the level and quality of, and access to, services remains unchanged, lower expenditure per child can indicate greater efficiency of government expenditure.

All efficiency data need to be interpreted with care, however. Changes in expenditure per child could represent changes in government funding policy. While high or increasing unit costs may reflect deteriorating efficiency, they may also reflect increases in the quality of service provided. Similarly, low or declining expenditure per child may reflect improving efficiency or lower quality.

Australian Government expenditure in 2003-04 ranged from \$755 per child in Queensland to \$413 per child in WA (figure 14.13).

Figure 14.13 Total Australian Government real expenditure on children's services per child aged 0–12 in the jurisdiction (2003-04 dollars)^{a, b}



^a Includes administration expenditure, other expenditure on service provision, financial support to families and net capital expenditure on child care and preschool services. ^b Data by State and Territory were not available for 1999-2000 and 2000-01.

Source: Australian Government (unpublished); table 14A.18.

Inputs per output unit — State and Territory government expenditure (dollars per child)

Box 14.13 State and Territory government expenditure

'State and Territory government expenditure' is included as an output (efficiency) indicator of governments' objective to maximise the availability and quality of services through the efficient use of taxpayer resources.

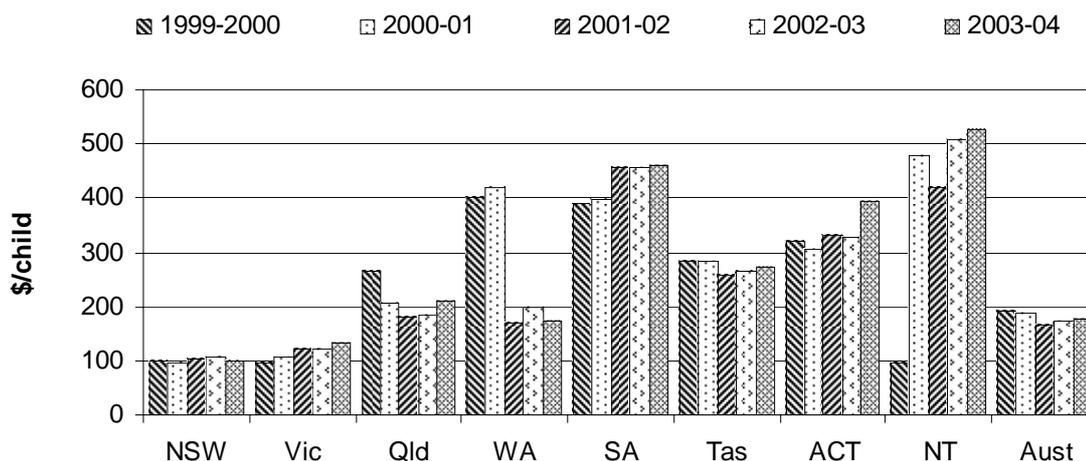
This indicator is defined as State or Territory government expenditure on children's services per child aged 0–12 years in the jurisdiction.

Lower expenditure per child represents greater efficiency of government expenditure, provided the level and quality of, and access to, services remains unchanged.

All efficiency data need to be interpreted with care, however. Changes in expenditure per child could represent changes in government funding policy. While high or increasing unit costs may reflect deteriorating efficiency, they may also reflect increases in the quality of service provided. Similarly, low or declining expenditure per child may reflect improving efficiency or lower quality.

State and Territory government total expenditure per child aged 0–12 years by jurisdiction in 2003-04 (figure 14.14) ranged from \$525 per child in the NT to \$100 per child in NSW (table 14A.19).

Figure 14.14 **Total State and Territory real expenditure on children’s services per child aged 0–12 in the jurisdiction (2003-04 dollars)^{a, b, c}**



^a Includes administration expenditure, other expenditure on service provision, financial support to families, and net capital expenditure on child care and preschool services. ^b WA expenditure for 2001-02 declined in response to the changes in the school entry age and the associated move to full time schooling for pre-year 1 children. ^c Data for 2003-04 exclude expenditure on the non-government sector.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 14A.19.

Outcomes

Demand for (additional) child care

Data on the ‘demand for additional child care services’ provides an important indicator of the success of children’s services in meeting the needs of the community (box 14.14).

Box 14.14 Demand for (additional) child care

This indicator provides an outcome indicator of governments’ objective to ensure children’s services meet the requirements of all Australian families. Expressed need for child care indicates the extent to which children’s services are meeting demand by families.

(Continued on next page)

Box 14.14 (Continued)

The indicator is defined as the proportion of children aged under 12 years for whom additional services were required in the four weeks before the survey interview.

A lower proportion of children for whom additional services were required indicates demand by families is being met to a greater extent.

One available indicator is the expressed need for additional child care services, which is collected in the ABS 2002 Child Care Survey (box 14.15).

Box 14.15 ABS 2002 Child Care Survey

The 2002 ABS Child Care Survey was conducted throughout Australia in June 2002, as a supplement to the Labour Force Survey.

Information was obtained from a sample of dwellings through interviews conducted over a two week period with usual residents with children under 12 years of age. In each selected household, detailed information about each child's child care was collected for a maximum of two children. Data were collected for a sample of approximately 10 000 children in total.

The survey included information about whether parents' needs for child care were met. Those families not already using child care or preschool services were asked whether there was any time in the previous four weeks when they wanted to use any child care or preschool services for their child but did not. Those families already using child care or preschool services were asked a similar question to determine whether they had wanted to use any more services in the previous four weeks.

Given that estimates from the 2002 survey are based on information obtained from a sample of dwellings, they are subject to sampling variability. They may differ from those estimates that would have been produced by a census. Estimates for the smaller jurisdictions are based on small sample sizes and, consequently, are subject to high sampling error. Data for Tasmania, the ACT and the NT, in particular, need to be interpreted with caution.

Aggregated survey data need to be interpreted with care, because over- and under supply of child care places can be specific to particular areas, including small and remote communities. Further, the data will not reflect changes in population in some areas since June 2002.

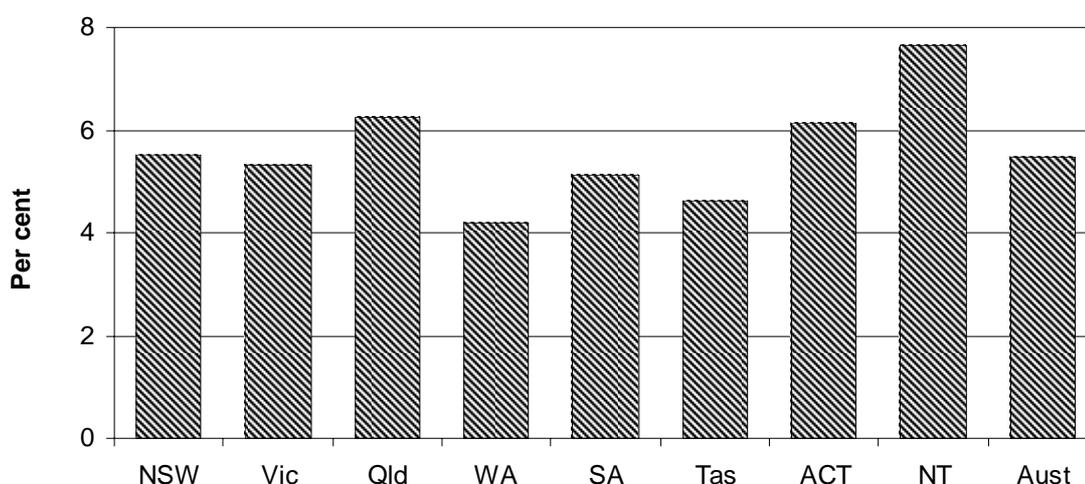
The next ABS Child Care Survey will be conducted in June 2005.

Nationally, no additional child care or preschool services were required for the majority (94.4 per cent) of children aged under 12 years in 2002 (table 14A.20). Additional services were required, however, for approximately 174 500 children

aged under 12 years (table 14A.21). Additional preschool services were required for less than 3 per cent of children aged under 12 years.

The proportion of children aged under 12 years for whom additional child care services were required ranged from 7.7 per cent in the NT to 4.2 per cent in WA (table 14A.20) (figure 14.15).

Figure 14.15 Proportion of children aged under 12 years for whom additional formal child care was required, 2002^a



^a Estimates for the smaller jurisdictions are based on small sample sizes and, consequently, are subject to high sampling error. Data for Tasmania, the ACT and the NT, in particular, need to be interpreted with caution. Source: ABS (unpublished) 2002 Child Care Survey; table 14A.20.

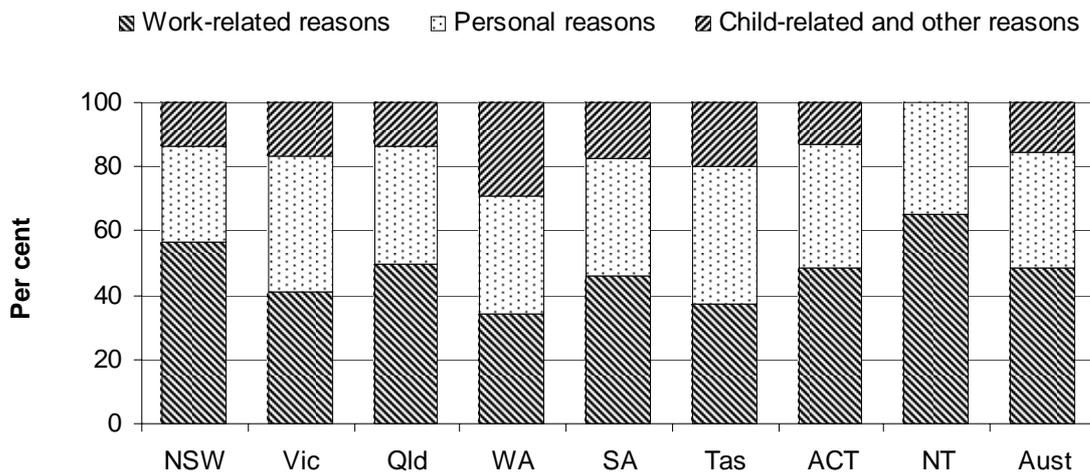
The reasons given for additional services being desired varied between those requiring additional child care services and those requiring additional preschool services. The needs of the parent, including the need to work, was the major reason for desiring additional child care services. Nationally, work-related reasons were cited in 48.4 per cent of circumstances, with personal reasons accounting for an additional 35.8 per cent of cases (figure 14.16). Child-related and other reasons were cited in the remaining 15.8 per cent of cases (table 14A.21).

Across jurisdictions, work-related reasons for desiring additional child care services ranged from 65.2 per cent in the NT to 34.4 per cent in WA. Personal reasons ranged from 42.9 per cent in Tasmania to 29.4 per cent in NSW (table 14A.21).

The most common reason given for not being able to access additional child care services was lack of available places ('booked out or no places', table 14A.22), accounting for 34.8 per cent of the national total. No services being available (or known of) in the area, and the cost of services were also significant reasons,

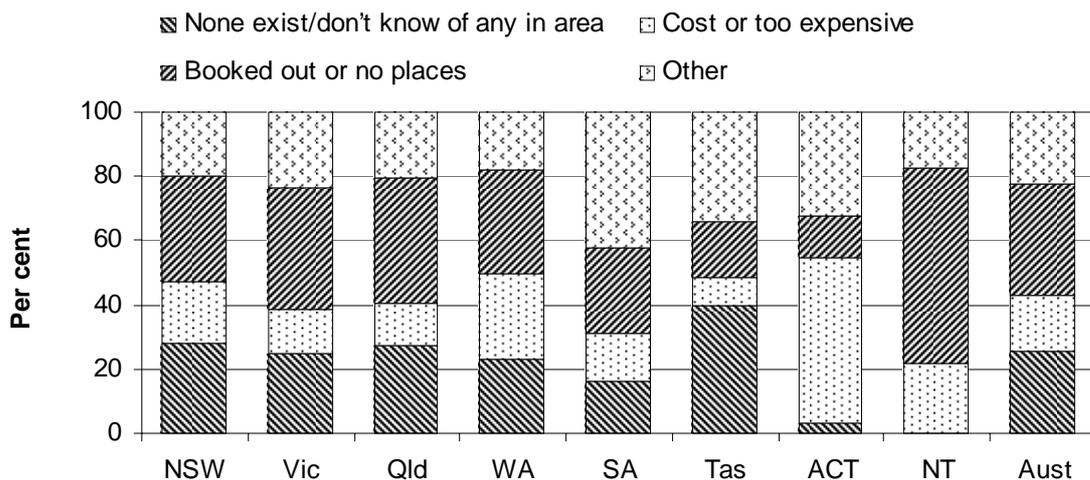
accounting for 25.3 per cent and 17.3 per cent respectively of the number of children requiring additional child care services (figure 14.17).

Figure 14.16 Children aged under 12 years who required additional child care services by main reason required, 2002^a



^a Estimates for the smaller jurisdictions are based on small sample sizes and, consequently, are subject to high sampling error. Data for Tasmania, the ACT and the NT, in particular, need to be interpreted with caution. Source: ABS (unpublished) 2002 Child Care Survey; table 14A.21.

Figure 14.17 Children aged under 12 years by main reason additional child care services not used, 2002^{a, b}



^a 'None exist/don't know of any in area' includes 'not known whether care available'. 'Other' includes 'other service related', 'child related' and 'other'. ^b Estimates for the smaller jurisdictions are based on small sample sizes and, consequently, are subject to high sampling error. Data for Tasmania, the ACT and the NT, in particular, need to be interpreted with caution.

Source: ABS (unpublished) 2002 Child Care Survey; table 14A.22.

Out-of-pocket costs

'Out-of-pocket costs' of child care is an important indicator of the affordability and accessibility of child care services (box 14.16).

Box 14.16 Out-of-pocket costs

'Out-of-pocket costs' is included as an outcome indicator of governments' objective that all Australian families have equitable access to children's services regardless of their financial circumstances.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of weekly disposable income that representative families spend on child care services before and after the payment of child care subsidies. Data are estimated for families with a 60:40 income split and gross annual income of \$27 000, \$35 000, \$45 000, \$55 000 and \$65 000. Families are assumed to have either one or two children who attend full time care (equal to 50 hours per child per week) in centre-based long day care and family day care.

Lower out-of-pocket costs for child care as a proportion of weekly disposable income (after child care subsidies) represents more affordable child care. Similar percentages across income groups suggest a more equitable outcome.

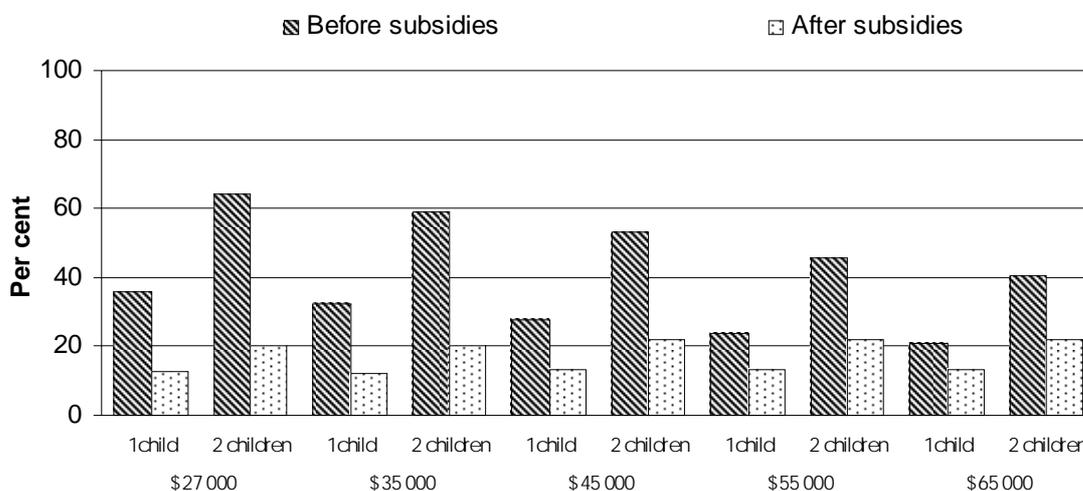
Care needs to be exercised when interpreting results, however, because a variety of factors may influence child care fees.

After the payment of child care subsidies, out-of-pocket costs as a proportion of weekly family income generally increase with gross annual family income. Nationally, families with one child in full time centre-based long day care at June 2004 and an annual gross family income of \$27 000 spent 12.5 per cent of their weekly disposable income on child care (compared with 35.8 per cent before payment of child care subsidies) (figure 14.18).

By contrast, families with one child in care and an annual gross family income of \$65 000 spent 13.4 per cent of their weekly disposable income on child care (compared with 20.5 per cent before payment of child care subsidies) (figure 14.18).

For families with two children in full time centre-based long day care, the proportion of weekly disposable income spent on child care was 20.5 per cent for those on an annual income of \$27 000 (compared with 64.0 per cent before payment of child care subsidies) and 22.0 per cent for those on an annual income of \$65 000 (compared with 40.2 per cent before payment of child care subsidies) (figure 14.18).

Figure 14.18 Out-of-pocket costs of child care for families with children in full time centre-based long day care, as a proportion of weekly disposable income, by gross annual family income, 2004^{a, b}



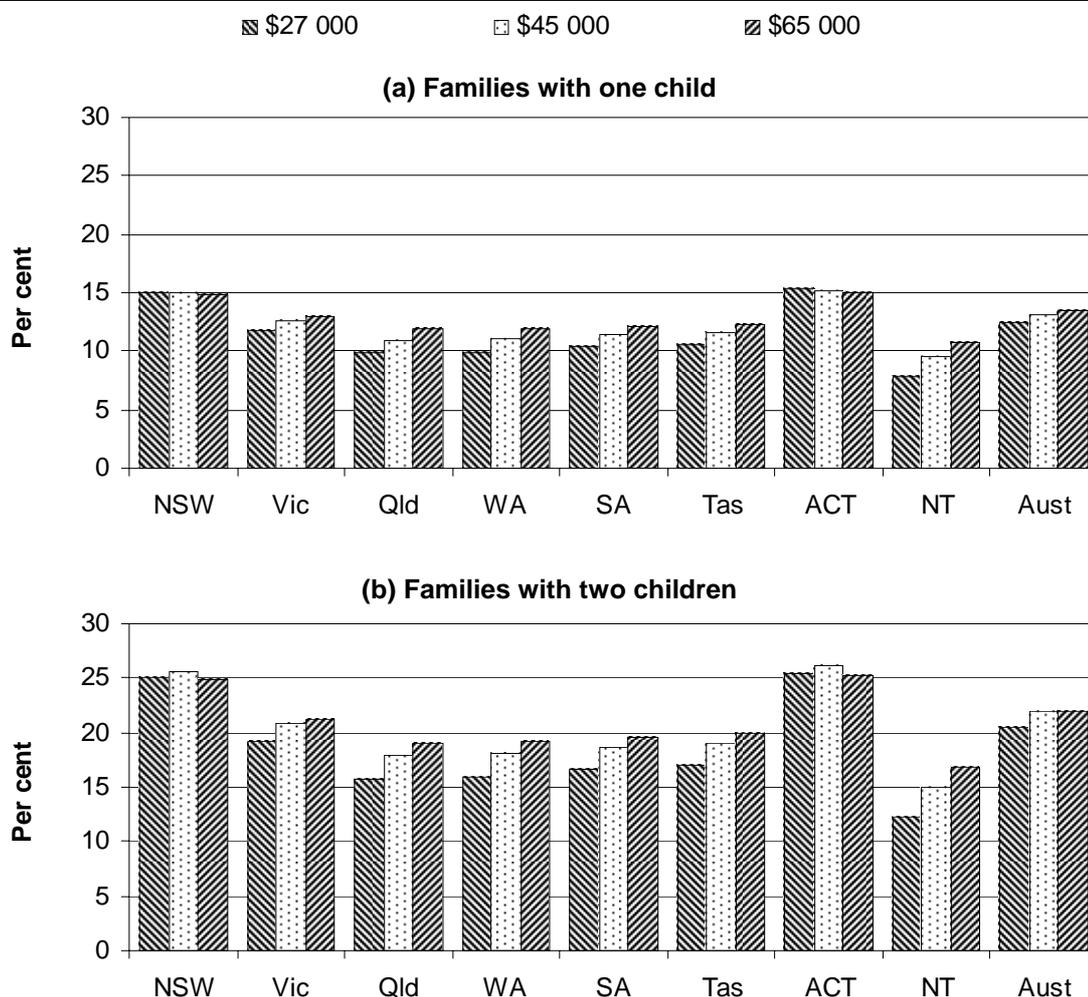
^a Disposable income calculations are based on 20 March 2004 tax and payment parameters. Calculations are modelled on couple families with dual incomes (60:40 income split) with one or two dependent children aged under 5 years. ^b Out-of-pocket cost calculations are based on June 2004 average fees.

Source: DFACS, AGCCCS March 2004 (unpublished data); table 14A.15.

Across jurisdictions in June 2004, out-of-pocket costs (after subsidies) for centre-based long day care for families with a gross annual income of \$27 000 and one child in care ranged from 15.3 per cent of weekly disposable income in the ACT to 7.9 per cent in the NT. Out-of-pocket costs (after subsidies) for families with a gross annual income of \$65 000 and one child in care ranged from 15.0 per cent of weekly disposable income in the ACT to 10.8 per cent in the NT (figure 14.19a).

For families with two children and a gross annual income of \$27 000, the out-of-pocket costs (after subsidies) for centre-based long day care ranged from 25.5 per cent of weekly disposable income in the ACT to 12.2 per cent in the NT. The corresponding proportion for families with two children in care and a gross annual income of \$65 000 ranged from 25.2 per cent in the ACT to 16.9 per cent in the NT (figure 14.19b).

Figure 14.19 **Out-of-pocket costs for centre-based long day care (after subsidies), as a proportion of weekly disposable income, by gross annual family income, 2004^{a, b}**



^a Disposable income calculations are based on 20 March 2004 tax and payment parameters. Calculations are modelled on couple families with dual incomes (60:40 income split) with one or two dependent children aged under 5 years. ^b Out-of-pocket cost calculations are based on June 2004 average fees, after subsidies.

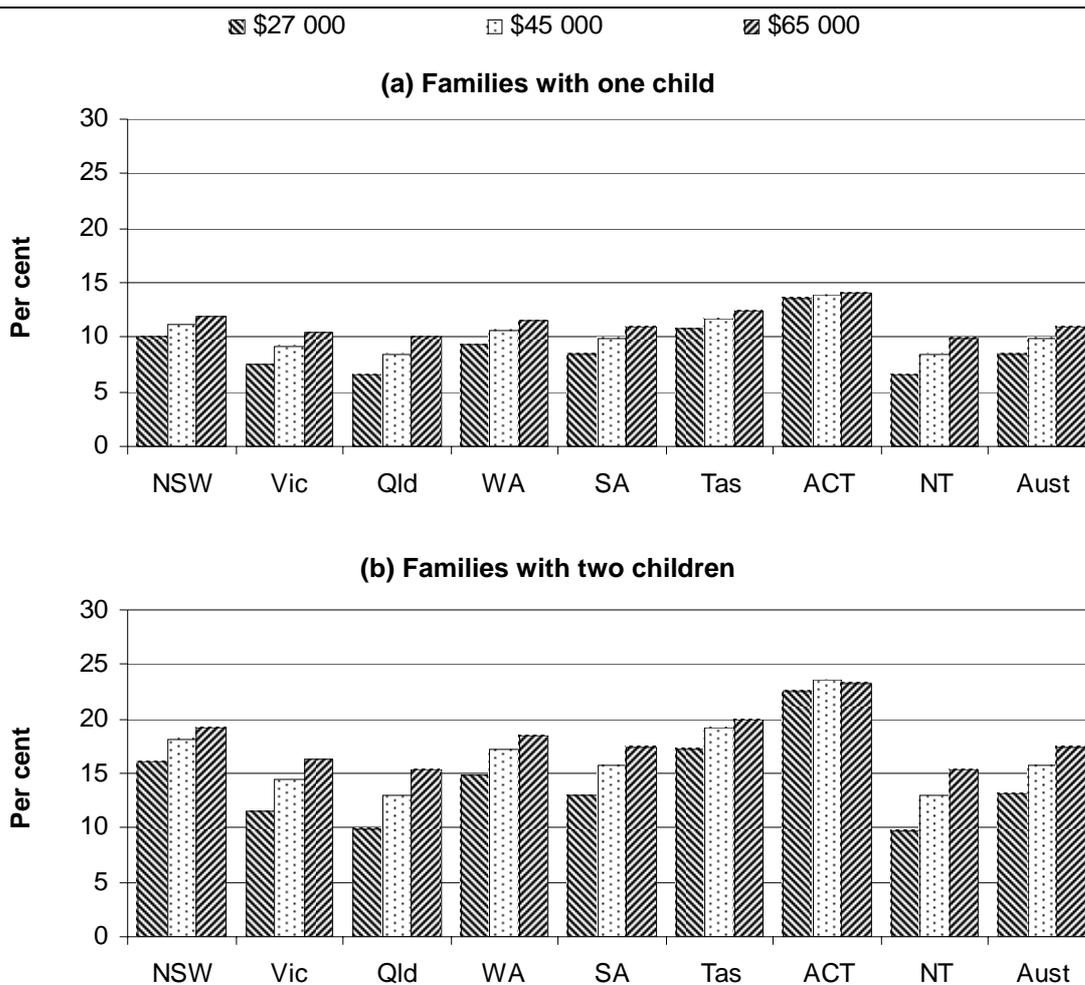
Source: DFACS, AGCCCS March 2004 (unpublished data); table 14A.15.

In 2004, the out-of-pocket costs (after subsidies) for family day care for a family with a gross annual income of \$27 000 and one child in full time care ranged from 13.6 per cent of weekly disposable income in the ACT to 6.5 per cent in both Queensland and the NT (figure 14.20a). The corresponding proportion for families with the same income and two children in care ranged from 22.5 per cent in the ACT to 9.8 per cent in both Queensland and the NT (figure 14.20b).

The proportion of weekly disposable income spent on child care (after subsidies) for a family with a gross annual income of \$65 000 and one child in full time family day care ranged from 14.0 per cent in the ACT to 10.0 per cent in both Queensland

and the NT (figure 14.20a). The corresponding proportion for a family with the same income and two children in care ranged from 23.3 per cent in the ACT to 15.3 per cent in both Queensland and the NT (figure 14.20b).

Figure 14.20 Out-of-pocket costs for family day care (after subsidies), as a proportion of weekly disposable income, by gross annual family income, 2004^{a, b}



^a Disposable income calculations are based on 20 March 2004 tax and payment parameters. Calculations are modelled on couple families with dual incomes (60:40 income split) with one or two dependent children aged under 5 years. ^b Out-of-pocket cost calculations are based on June 2004 average fees, after subsidies.

Source: DFACS, AGCCCS March 2004 (unpublished data); table 14A.16.

Client satisfaction

The Steering Committee has identified ‘client satisfaction’ as an outcome indicator of children’s services meeting family needs (box 14.17). Data for this indicator, however, were not available for the 2005 Report.

Box 14.17 Client satisfaction

'Client satisfaction' will provide an outcome indicator of governments' objective to ensure children's services meet the needs and expectations of all users.

Data are currently not collected on this indicator. The Steering Committee has identified this indicator for development and reporting in future.

14.4 Future directions in performance reporting

The Steering Committee is committed to continually improving the comparability, completeness and overall quality of reported data for all indicators included within the performance indicator framework.

Improving reporting of existing indicators

Processes for refining definitions, estimating methods and counting rules are continuing. Further work is planned to improve the consistency and comparability of performance information across jurisdictions. Changes in the children's services industry have required jurisdictions to revise collection methods, and these revisions have reduced the comparability of historical data across years and across jurisdictions. It will take some time before the improvements are reflected in the chapter.

Future indicator development

The Review will continue to improve the appropriateness and completeness of the performance indicator framework. Future work on indicators will focus on:

- developing an access indicator for Indigenous preschool enrolment and attendance rates
- developing a service availability indicator for utilisation rates
- completing the quality indicators for licensing, accreditation and registration
- improving the government expenditure efficiency indicators
- revising the quality indicators for health and safety, and client satisfaction
- developing indicators to measure the extent to which children's services meet family needs, including investigating an outcome indicator of client satisfaction

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- developing indicators to measure the extent to which children's services meet children's needs
 - conducting a rolling revision of all indicators within the framework.

Options for reporting on service appropriateness in future reports will also be investigated. While these areas have been identified as requiring further work, improvements to the chapter and progress on performance reporting will not be limited to these indicators.

Improving the completeness and comparability of data

National Minimum Data Set

The National Community Services Information Management Group's Children's Services Data Working Group, under the auspices of the CSDMAC, is developing a National Minimum Data Set (NMDS) for children's services. When completed, this data set will provide a framework for collecting a minimum set of nationally comparable data and assist the development of measurable performance indicators and descriptors.

The first stage of the NMDS was pilot tested in 2002. It set out to test data elements assessing the characteristics of the children who use child care and preschool services, the organisations providing these services, and their primary contact staff. The results of the pilot were positive in terms of a national data collection.

The second stage of the NMDS for children's services was pilot tested in September 2004 across 46 services. Stage 2 items included further characteristics of organisations providing child care and preschool services, characteristics of workers delivering these services, and additional characteristics of children who use services, and their families. The second pilot test covered all data items from both stage 1 and stage 2. A full report on the development phase of the NMDS will be released at the end of June 2005, and the Working Group is assessing options for implementing a national data collection in 2006-07.

Data collection

Consistency in the data collected by State and Territory governments is an important goal in terms of data comparability. One way of improving comparability is to collect data in a (preferably common) sample week that is representative of a typical standard week (and does not include any public holidays) in each State and Territory. There is still room for improvement in the data collection process.

14.5 Jurisdictions' comments

This section provides comments from each jurisdiction on the services covered in this chapter. Appendix A contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. These data cover a range of demographic and geographic characteristics, including age profile, geographic distribution of the population, income levels, education levels, tenure of dwellings and cultural heritage (including Indigenous and ethnic status).

Australian Government comments

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The Australian Government is committed to the development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood which will provide the overarching structure to guide future Australian Government investment to improve outcomes for children and will serve as the vehicle for collaboration with state and territory governments in supporting young children and their families.

The 2004-05 Budget saw further investment in child care including an increase of 40 000 Outside School Hours Care places and 4000 Family Day Care places. Additional funds were made available to improve access to child care for children with high support needs and increase support for rural, regional and Indigenous communities.

The Child Care Support Program (CCSP) announced in June 2004, is the culmination of an extensive consultative review of the Child Care Broadband. The review identified a number of gaps in child care provision particularly for families in rural and remote Australia, children with disabilities, Indigenous families, and families from diverse backgrounds. The CCSP addresses these issues and provides clear objectives and principles and better targeted and transparent funding arrangements for child care services.

The development of an Indigenous child care strategy was also announced in June 2004. The Indigenous child care strategy aims to provide flexible funding for Indigenous services, guide future development of Indigenous child care and identify resources, roles and responsibilities of agencies in the Indigenous child care sector. A process for consultation on the development of the strategy is being developed.

The Australian Government is implementing new measures to improve the affordability of child care. The child care tax rebate will provide families receiving Child Care Benefit (CCB) and who use approved child care with a 30 per cent tax rebate for out-of-pocket expenses from 1 January 2005. Increased assistance is also being provided to grandparents with primary care of their grandchildren. From 1 November 2004, the work test was waived for eligible grandparent carers, allowing access to up to 50 hours of CCB as opposed to the normal 20 hours for carers who do not meet the work test. Subject to passage of legislation, from 1 January 2005, free approved child care will be available to eligible grandparent carers receiving an income support payment.

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New South Wales Government comments

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The central feature of the NSW Government's Early Childhood Services Policy is its focus on the importance of the early years of life through a system of good quality children's services that are responsive to the needs of children in the context of their families and the communities in which they live.

NSW's regulatory framework recognises the integrated nature of early childhood education and care. All licensed early childhood services are required by regulation to provide an education program tailored to each child's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development and to employ appropriately qualified teaching staff.

For this reason, the structure of the children's services chapter continues to pose difficulties in comparing the performance of NSW with that of other jurisdictions and in accurately reporting NSW data. The chapter is based on distinguishing preschool from child care, which does not reflect the integrated delivery of early childhood education in NSW. NSW urges caution in any use or interpretation of this data in relation to the number of children that access a preschool program.

After extensive review and consultation with child care providers, parents and early childhood professionals, the new Children's Services Regulation 2004 came into effect on 30 September 2004. There is a 15-month transition period for the new Regulation for existing children's services providers.

Some key changes under the new Regulations include: services are required to install safety glass in areas accessible to children; maximum group size for children 3–5 years is reduced from 25 to 20; venue management plans have been introduced for mobile children's services; two primary care staff must check children are not left in a centre at the end of the day; probity checks on anyone engaged in the operation or management of children's service; and video monitoring equipment is no longer allowed for remote viewing such as over the internet.

A review of the Children's Services Affordability Policy for fee relief in preschools, funded by the Department of Community Services, was commenced in 2003 and has since been broadened in scope, taking into account all funding sources for preschools. The Stage 2 Review of Preschool Funding commenced in April 2004 and will focus on more effective use of existing funding resources, having regard to the joint goals of access to preschool and affordability of those preschool places.

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Victorian Government comments

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The Victorian Government's commitment to building stronger communities and ensuring the wellbeing of all children wherever they live, play or are cared for is articulated in its *Children First* policy. The focus is on providing services in ways that are integrated, accessible and affordable.

The integration of early childhood services is being assisted through the establishment of new kindergartens and children's centres. These capital projects bring together services such as kindergarten, child care, maternal and child health and early intervention, in areas of high need and in growth corridors. A total of \$16 million over three years has been committed and already 27 projects have been funded.

This initiative is supported by a \$5 million project that is providing computers and information technology support for community-based kindergartens and community-based long day care centres that provide kindergarten services.

The implementation of Best Start continues, with two Aboriginal demonstration projects established, bringing the total number of projects to thirteen. These demonstration projects have established partnerships that are working to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of children from pregnancy through to transition to school. Action plans focus on activities such as improving access to and participation in universal services, strengthening local communities, establishing playgroups and early literacy projects.

Implementation of kindergarten cluster management, which groups individual, community-based kindergartens together under a single employer organisation, continues. It is easing the pressures on voluntary committees of management and providing stable employment arrangements for staff.

A range of quality initiatives have been introduced including an integrated early years training strategy which delivered training to 1200 early years professionals on a multidisciplinary basis; implementation of a mentoring initiatives for kindergarten teachers; and the development of resources and training for outside school hours care services and children's services.

In Victoria there is a strong partnership between State and Local Government in relation to early childhood services. It is within this context that Local Governments are developing individual Municipal Early Years Plans to articulate the strategic direction for the development and coordination of educational, care and health programs and other local activities that impact on children 0–6 years. These plans will support Local Government to work in partnership with the community to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for young children.

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Queensland Government comments

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The Queensland Government continued its commitment to work towards a child care system for Queensland children and families that is responsive, sustainable and of a high quality, by introducing the *Child Care Act 2002* and the *Child Care Regulation 2003* on 1 September 2003.

The licensing of school age care services and increased qualification requirements for centre-based child care workers are important features of the new legislation. The continued implementation of the Child Care Statewide Training Strategy supports the implementation of the legislation by providing access to subsidised and flexible training programs to more than 4000 child care workers. By June 2004, more than 1571 workers (including 68 from Indigenous communities in Far North Queensland) had gained an approved child care qualification which meets the legislative requirements.

The Queensland Government's 'Education and Training Reforms for the Future' package of initiatives collectively aim to maximise students' educational outcomes. The trial of a full-time preparatory year, through the *Preparing for School* trial is a critical component of this initiative.

From 2007 the Queensland Government will implement a full-time, universally available, non-compulsory preparatory year. The decision to implement the preparatory year, which will replace the current sessional preschool program in Queensland State schools, was based on evidence gathered during the initial phase of the *Preparing for School* trial. From 2005, 96 schools will be offering a preparatory year as part of a statewide phase-in leading to full implementation in 2007. An additional 25 schools will come on line for the 2006 school year. The Queensland Studies Authority has developed a draft *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines and draft Early Learning and Development Framework* for use by teachers when planning, implementing and monitoring preparatory programs.

The Queensland Government continues to work with the child care sector to implement priorities identified in the *Queensland Child Care Strategic Plan 2000–2005*. In 2003-04, an additional six services were recommended for funding of more than \$500 000 under the successful Child Care and Family Support Hub Strategy which supports the delivery of integrated child care and family support services. In addition, \$1.1 million was allocated for the upgrade of school age care services and more than \$500 000 was allocated for the upgrade of community-based child care services in rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

The Queensland Government has demonstrated a commitment to engaging with the sector by providing information sessions relating to the new legislative standards, distributing a regular newsletter to all child care services and engaging with the Child Care Forum to discuss and develop strategies to address issues impacting on children and families. The Queensland Government remains committed to using data and research to inform planning and decision making and is working to enhance the availability, integrity and comparability of data for future reports.

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Western Australian Government comments

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The Department for Community Development is continuing to strengthen the management of its licensing and monitoring functions. All licensing staff have attained *Certificate IV in Government: Statutory Investigation and Enforcement* to improve the Department's ability to mount successful prosecution cases. The Department is introducing a new information system which will improve the storage and access to information about services and applicants and support the Child Care Licensing Unit's new work processes.

The Child Care Advisory Committee has been established to provide the Minister for Community Development with information and advice on matters related to licensing and quality assurance in child care. Members consist of government, community, sector and academic representatives chosen for their ability to represent the interests of a broad cross section of the child care sector, in particular, children and parents.

The *Children and Community Services Act 2004* recognises the changing nature of the child care sector and will provide more flexibility in the ways services can be prescribed. The Act will provide the legislative base to develop new regulations for child care that are consistent with contemporary theory and practice. The development of the regulations will commence early in 2005 with sector-wide consultations.

The Department for Community Development won a contract to provide the training associated with the introduction of the Australian Government's quality assurance system to outside school hours care services in Western Australia. Thus the Department is providing a coordinated approach to the introduction of the *Community Services (Outside School Hours Care) Regulations 2002* and quality assurance.

With the introduction of the new outside school hours licensing system, child care providers in Western Australia now apply for: a centre or family day care licence (OSHC 5–12 years); or for a centre or family day care licence (child care 0–5 years). Individual family day carers are licensed in Western Australia.

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South Australian Government comments



In South Australia, education and children's services are aligned within the same portfolio. This offers unique opportunities for drawing together child care, preschool and schooling, and for building better relationships with other agencies and services involved with young children.

During 2003-04, site based research, shared learning and critical collaboration across children's services and the early years of school have supported the implementation of the state-wide curriculum framework (South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability framework). Improved early literacy learning for children in the context of their families is also being facilitated through the Learning Together Project.

It is recognised that working families require greater access to child care, particularly in communities where young children and families are at greater risk of social exclusion. It was announced this year that the State would support and strengthen families and communities by reopening closed child care centres in high need locations. The first centre will open in July 2004, with another two sites expected to open during the next 12 months when building works are complete.

With the aim of increasing the overall level of qualifications within the Children's Services workforce, the government has introduced incentives for staff to pursue formal qualifications. The Child Care Qualification Scholarship Fund offers financial assistance and work release subsidies for child care workers to undertake training in the form of a Diploma of Community Services (Children's Services).

This year the department has implemented innovative new models of integrated child care and preschool in rural communities. In a joint State and Federal government initiative, the sixth rural care site was opened which provides long day care to families in small rural communities. The government is also exploring new models of integrated delivery of child care, preschool and schooling in locations such as Sturt Street Community School. In doing so, the government is further developing interagency partnerships, thereby linking child care, child health and family services such as the Children and Families Everywhere service at Enfield Primary School.

The Minister for Education and Children's Services has announced an early childhood services inquiry. The steering committee will report to the South Australian Government on such issues as: the availability, adequacy and quality of services; the most effective relationships with other family policy settings; the affordability of child care; and how best to support young children and families through seamless service delivery.



Tasmanian Government comments

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The State Government continues to extend and implement relevant supportive strategies in recognition of the importance of the early years. There has also been a restructure within the Department of Education bringing together child care and education responsibilities under the Early Years banner.

The *Child Care Act 2001* commenced on 1 September 2003 and all centre based care services for children 0–5 years have been licensed against the new standards. Standards for Approved Registration Bodies (Family Day Care Schemes) and home based care are in final stages of development. An audit of Outside School Hours Care services in 2004 demonstrated that many services were not fully aware of basic requirements such as duty of care and health and safety. It was therefore decided that the first round of licensing would be against five only core standards, with the remainder to be implemented in 2005-06. Additional training for Outside School Hours Care services will be arranged through a 2004-05 State budget initiative of \$20 000.

Five million dollars from the sale of Government assets is being used to build child care centres on school premises where there is an identified community demand for child care. One service opened in 2004 with five more expected to open early 2005, increasing the number of child care places by more than 280.

The Government retains strong support for the early childhood sector through the implementation of the *Essential Learnings* curriculum:

- In the 2002-03 State Budget two pilots, to support families with young children under the Strong Start Program, were announced. These initiatives are at the stage of implementation, in consultation with stakeholders,
- *A Policy for the Early Years* has been developed as a working document, linking supportive early years programs, interagency collaboration and children's later learning success,
- The Essential Connections research, publications, projects and associated professional development, focusing on the new curriculum framework in child care settings and schools, are nearing completion.
- Cluster Groups of carers and teachers continue to provide opportunities for professional learning and partnership collaboration,
- Discussions between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education have led to the trial of new prior-to-school health screening procedures,
- A collaborative project between the Department of Education and the University of Tasmania was undertaken to develop an early childhood resource linking the Kindergarten Development Check with the *Essential Learnings* Framework.

Other inter-agency initiatives are being planned for 2004 through the work of the Our Kids Bureau in collaboration with Department of Education.

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Australian Capital Territory Government comments

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Quality education and care for children from birth provides the foundation for development and lifelong learning. The ACT Government supports the provision of quality programs that give children the opportunity to have a fulfilling childhood and every chance to realise their full potential.

The Department of Education and Training, in partnership with parent communities, is responsible for providing preschool services for all eligible children in the year immediately prior to their entry to school.

The Office for Children, Youth and Family Support is responsible for licensing and monitoring children's services in the ACT to ensure they meet the requirements of the *Children and Young People Act 1999*. These services include centre based children's services, school age care, family day care, independent preschools and playschools. Funding is also provided to assist with the provision of a range of children's services programs, including early intervention programs.

In June 2004, Minister Katy Gallagher MLA launched the whole of government *ACT Children's Plan 2004–14*. Extensive consultation informed the Plan's development, with over 2500 Canberra children sharing their views on what they want for the future. The Plan focuses on three main areas: children now and in the future; children and their families; and children and their community. The *ACT Children's Plan* is based on a shared commitment between government, community, parents and carers to provide an integrated approach to planning with and for Canberra children, to meet children's diverse and changing needs and circumstances.

The development of the Preschool Strategic Plan 2005–2010 has taken place in 2004 for the management of ACT Government preschools. A consultation phase with key stakeholders in early childhood in the ACT included questionnaires and focus groups facilitated by an independent facilitator. Feedback from the consultation has contributed to the development of the plan. The plan will provide a way forward for preschool education in the longer term, and direction for ongoing operations in the shorter term. The plan is due to be released early 2005.

The provision of preschool education across two longer days was expanded from a successful trial of two preschool groups in 2003 to six groups in 2004. Feedback received on this initiative from families during the Preschool Strategic Plan consultation phase was positive.

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Northern Territory Government comments



Children's services in the Northern Territory aim to support families and communities in caring for and educating their children.

The Territory has a small and young population dispersed across one-sixth of the national landmass. About 40 per cent of the 0–12 population are Indigenous children, some 75 per cent of whom live in small remote communities and towns. Diseconomies of scale, an environment ranging from desert to tropical climates, and the particular interests and needs of the population have resulted in unique approaches to providing children's services in the Northern Territory.

Comparability for reporting purposes therefore continues to be difficult. For example, this and previous reports indicate a considerably lower participation level of Indigenous children in child care services, however the data do not include participation in other services and activities such as innovative child care centres, 'Jobs, Education and Training' creches, playgroups and informal care services, which are preferred service models in a number of communities.

A low proportion of services offering non-standard hours of operation may be due to comparatively reduced travel to work times in the major urban areas.

In 2003–2004, the focus of the program was on continuing to expand access to appropriate children's care and education services in remote Indigenous communities and tailoring services to better meet family needs. The number of child care staff with formal qualifications is increasing, this will continue to be an focus of work for 2004–2005.

2004–2005 will see the finalising and implementation of new legislation for regulating children's services in the Northern Territory. Work will also progress to implement a new framework for supporting children and families across the education, health, disability and child care sectors.



14.6 Definitions of key terms and indicators

Administration expenditure	All expenditure by the departments responsible for the provision of licensing, advice, policy development, grants administration and training services. Responsible departments include those that administer policy for, fund and license/accredit child care and preschool services in each jurisdiction.
Centre-based long day care	Services aimed primarily at 0–5 year olds that are provided in a centre, usually by a mix of qualified and other staff. Educational, care and recreational programs are provided based on the developmental needs, interests and experience of each child. In some jurisdictions, primary school children may also receive care before and after school, and during school vacations. Centres typically operate for at least eight hours per day on normal working days, for a minimum of 48 weeks per year.
Child care	The meeting of a child’s care, education and developmental needs by a person other than the child’s parent or guardian. The main types of service are centre-based long day care, family day care, outside school hours care (vacation, before/after school hours and ‘pupil free days’ care), occasional care and other care.
Children	All resident male and female Australians aged 12 years or younger at 30 June of each year.
Children from Indigenous backgrounds	Children of Indigenous descent who identify as being Indigenous and are accepted as such by the community in which they live.
Children from a non-English speaking background (NESB)	Children living in situations where the main language spoken is not English.
Children from single parent families	Dependent children who are resident in households of lone parent (either father or mother) families.
Children’s services	All government funded and/or provided child care and preschool services (unless otherwise stated).
Counting rules	Prescribed standards, definitions and mathematical methods for determining descriptors and performance indicators for monitoring government services.
Expenditure on assets	Expenditure on the acquisition or enhancement of fixed assets, less trade-in values and/or receipts from the sale of replaced or otherwise disposed of items.
Disability related care	Care of children who have a developmental delay or disability (including a intellectual, sensory or physical impairment), or who have parent(s) with a disability.
Family day care	Services provided in the carer’s home. The care is largely aimed at 0–5 year olds, but primary school children may also receive care before and after school, and during school vacations. Central coordination units in all states and territories organise and support a network of carers, often with the help of local governments.

Financial support to families	Any form of fee relief paid by governments to the users of children's services (for example, Child Care Benefit).
Formal child care	Organised care provided by a person other than the child's parent or guardian, usually outside of the child's home — for example, centre-based long day care, family day care, outside school hours care, vacation care and occasional care (excluding babysitting).
Formal qualifications	Early childhood-related teaching degree (three or four years), a child care certificate or associate diploma (two years) and/or other relevant qualifications (for example, a diploma or degree in child care [three years or more], primary teaching, other teaching, nursing [including mothercraft nursing], psychology and social work). Some jurisdictions do not recognise one year certificates.
Full time equivalent staff numbers	A measure of the total level of staff resources used. A full time staff member is employed full time and engaged solely in activities that fall within the scope of children's services covered in the chapter. The full time equivalent of part time staff is calculated on the basis of the proportion of time spent on activities within the scope of the data collection compared with that spent by a full time staff member solely occupied by the same activities.
Government funded or/and provided	All government financed services — that is, services that receive government contributions towards providing a specified service (including private services eligible for Child Care Benefit) and/or services for which the government has primary responsibility for delivery.
Informal child care	Child care arrangements provided privately (for example, by friends, relatives, nannies) for which no government assistance (other than the minimum rate of Child Care Benefit for Registered Care) is provided. Such care is unregulated in most states and territories.
In-home care	Care provided by an approved carer in the child's home. Families eligible for in-home care include those where the parent(s) or child has an illness/disability, those in regional or remote areas, those where the parents are working shift work or non-standard hours, those with multiple births (more than two) and/or more than two children under school age, and those with a breastfeeding mother working from home.
In-service training	Formal training only (that is, structured training sessions that may be conducted in-house or externally), including training in work or own time but not training towards qualifications included in obtaining formal qualifications. It includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management or financial training • training for additional needs children (such as children with a disability, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and children from a culturally diverse background) • other child care-related training • other relevant courses (such as a first aid certificate).
Licensed services	Those services that comply with the relevant State or Territory licensing regulations. These regulations cover matters such as the number of children whom the service can care for, safety requirements and the required qualifications of carers.

Non-standard hours of care	<p>Defined by service type as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • centre-based long day care —providers of service for more than 10 hours per day on Monday to Friday and/or service on weekends • preschool —providers of service for more than six hours per day • family day care — providers of service for more than 50 hours per week and/or service overnight and/or on weekends • vacation care — providers of service for more than 10 hours per day • before school hours care — providers of service for more than two hours before school • after school care — providers of service for more than three hours after school • occasional care — providers of service for more than eight hours per day • other — providers of service for more than 10 hours per day.
Occasional care	<p>Services usually provided at a centre on an hourly or sessional basis for short periods or at irregular intervals for parents who need time to attend appointments, take care of personal matters, undertake casual and part time employment, study or have temporary respite from full time parenting. These services provide developmental activities for children and are aimed primarily at 0–5 year olds. Centres providing these services usually employ a mix of qualified and other staff.</p>
Operational place	<p>A licensed place (where a licensing system exists, or in receipt of government funding where not licensed) able to accept children at 30 June each year.</p>
Other services	<p>Government funded services to support children with additional needs or in particular situations (including children from an Indigenous or non-English speaking background, children with a disability or of parents with a disability, and children living in regional and remote areas).</p>
Other expenditure on service provision	<p>All recurrent expenditure on government funded and/or provided child care and preschool services. It also includes one-off, non-capital payments to peak agencies that support child care and preschool service providers.</p>
Outside school hours care	<p>Services provided for school aged children (5–12 year olds) outside school hours during term and vacations. Care may be provided on student free days and when school finishes early.</p>
Preschools	<p>Services usually provided by a qualified teacher on a sessional basis in dedicated preschools. Preschool programs or curricula may also be provided in long day care centres and other settings. These services are primarily aimed at children in the year before they commence full time schooling (that is, when children are 4 years old in all jurisdictions), although younger children may also attend in most jurisdictions.</p>
Primary contact staff	<p>Staff whose primary function is to provide care and/or preschool services to children.</p>
Program support activities	<p>Administration expenditure associated with the licensing of services that do not receive government funding.</p>

Real expenditure	Actual expenditure adjusted for changes in prices. Adjustments were made using the GDP price deflator and expressed in terms of final year prices.
Recurrent expenditure	Expenditure that does not result in the creation or acquisition of fixed assets (new or second hand). It consists mainly of expenditure on wages, salaries and supplements, purchases of goods and services, and the consumption of fixed capital (depreciation).
Regional and remote areas	<p>Geographic location is based on the ABS's Australian Standard Geographical Classification of Remoteness Areas, which categorises areas as 'major cities', 'inner regional', 'outer regional', 'remote', 'very remote' and 'migratory'. The criteria for remoteness areas are based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia, which measures the remoteness of a point based on the physical road distance to the nearest urban centre in each of five size classes (ABS 2001).</p> <p>The 'regional' classification used in this chapter was derived by adding data for inner regional and outer regional areas. The 'remote' classification was derived by adding data for remote, very remote and migratory areas.</p> <p>In previous reports, geographic location data was based on the rural, remote and metropolitan areas classification (DPIE and DSHS 1994).</p>
Serious injury	Injury requiring hospitalisation or a visit to (or by) a doctor.
Service	The type of service provided. Preschool service, for example, is a package of educational and developmental services received by a child in the year or two before full time schooling. Preschool services may be provided by either a preschool service provider or a child care service provider.
Service type	<p>The categories for which data were collected, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • centre-based long day care • family day care • outside school hours care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – vacation care – before/after school care • occasional care • 'other' care • preschool services.
Substantiated complaint	An expression of concern about a child care or preschool service, made orally, in writing or in person, which constitutes a failure by the service to abide by the State or Territory legislation, regulations or conditions. This concern is investigated and subsequently considered to have substance by the regulatory body.
Vacation care	Care and developmental activities provided for school age children during school vacation periods
Proportion of services providing non-standard hours of care	The number of services providing non-standard hours of care, divided by the total number of services, by service type.
Proportion of special needs groups using services relative to their population proportions	The number of children from special needs groups using children's services, divided by the total number of children using children's services. Results are presented separately for child care and preschool services, with special needs groups divided into children from a non-English speaking background, children from an Indigenous

Serious injuries sustained per registered or licensed service

background, children from low income families, children with a disability, and children from regional or remote areas. These results are compared with these groups' representation in the community.

The total number of serious injuries sustained by children divided by the total number of licensed services.

Substantiated complaints per registered or licensed service

The number of substantiated complaints divided by the total number of licensed services. Results are presented separately by service type. The proportion of substantiated complaints against which action was taken is also reported.

Out-of-pocket costs relative to family income for children's services

Modelling undertaken by the Department of Family and Community Services for families with one child and two children respectively in full time care (defined as 50 hours per week for each child) for a range of indicative annual incomes. Out-of-pocket costs are based on the average weekly fee for one child and two children in full time care, and are calculated as a proportion of weekly disposable income, after the payment of child care subsidies. The gross annual income levels used are \$27 000, \$35 000, \$45 000, \$55 000 and \$65 000, with a 60:40 income split.

14.7 References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2003, *Child Care*, Cat. nos 4402.0, 4402.1.40.001–4402.8.40.001, Canberra.

DPIE (Department of Primary Industries and Energy) and DSHS (Department of Human Services and Health) 1994 *Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas Classification 1991 Census Edition*, Australian Government, Canberra.

NCAC (National Childcare Accreditation Council) 2001, *FDCQA Quality Practices Guide*.

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