
11 CHILDREN'S SERVICES

11.1 Introduction

In the context of this Report, children's services include child care and preschool services. Both seek to provide appropriate care to children, and to foster their educational and other development. The children's services performance data presented build on the framework of performance indicators developed for the previous Report (SCRCSSP 1997).

Child care refers to care of a child up to 12 years by other than the child's parents or guardian outside the child's home.¹ Preschool services are mainly provided to children in the year prior to full-time schooling (Box 11.1).

Generally, the data presented in this chapter relate to children's services which are funded and/or provided by the Commonwealth and/or State and Territory Governments. Privately provided child care for which no government assistance is provided (other than the Commonwealth Government's Childcare Cash Rebate) are excluded. The exceptions are some data related to families using the Childcare Cash Rebate for informal care; and some quality of care indicators (the number of complaints, serious injuries and outbreaks of notifiable diseases) which are presented for all state and territory registered or licensed services.

The scope of the reporting has been broadened to include preschool services offered to children other than those in the year immediately before commencement of full-time schooling. The comparability of available performance information has also improved since the previous Report — for example, data on administrative costs are now collected on a consistent basis across all jurisdictions. Other improvements to definitions and counting rules are not yet reflected in the data set due to timing differences in data collections across states and territories, but will become more apparent in future Reports. In addition, all jurisdictions are working towards improving the availability of data and improving comparability by establishing a uniform reference period for the 2000 Report.

¹ Data presented in this chapter relate to services provided for children 12 years and younger unless otherwise stated.

Box 11.1: Types of children's services

Children's services aim to further children's social, emotional, physical and intellectual development. Services are provided for children up to 12 years by someone other than the child's parents or guardian outside the child's home. This can be in the form of:

- *preschool*: services usually provided by a qualified teacher on a sessional basis in dedicated preschools. Preschool type programs or curriculum may also be provided in long day care centres;
- *centre-based long day care*: child care provided at a centre which operates for a minimum of eight hours per day, five days a week, 48 weeks a year;
- *family day care*: care provided for children in the carer's own home. It is largely aimed at 0 to 5 year olds, but primary school children may also receive care before and after school and during school vacations. In all states and territories, a network of carers is organised and supported by central coordination units;
- *occasional care*: child care provided at a centre on an hourly or sessional basis 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;
- *school age care*: care provided for school aged children (5 to 12 years) outside school hours during term and vacations. Care is also provided on student-free days and when school finishes early; and
- *other services*: government funded services to support children with additional needs or in particular situations (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from non-English speaking backgrounds, children with a disability or of parents with a disability, and children living in remote and rural areas).

11.2 Profile of children's services

The roles and responsibilities of Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments in children's services are outlined below. Local Governments also play a role in the planning and provision of children's services in some states and territories.

11.2.1 Government provision and funding

Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments have different but interlocking roles in the area of children's services.

The Commonwealth Government's primary focus is support of workforce participation by parents. In relation to child care, it achieves this by:

- providing operational and capital funding to providers;
- assisting families with the cost of their child care fees through income support programs;
- planning to enhance the mix of services and level of access available to meet the needs of the community;
- providing information and advice to parents and providers about the availability of Commonwealth-funded services;
- assisting in ensuring quality child care services by funding a mandatory Quality Improvement and Accreditation System for centre-based long day care (CBLDC) services eligible for government funding and developing standards; and
- providing information, support and training to service providers through program support funding to organisations.

The Commonwealth Government also directly provides a small amount of funding for preschool services through supplementary payments for the education of indigenous children and recurrent funding for some services in Queensland and WA (AIHW 1997).

State and Territory Governments have a broader focus for children's services than the Commonwealth Government. They assist services to meet a wide variety of family needs by:

- providing funding to non-government service providers;
- providing some services directly (especially preschool services);
- licensing and setting standards for children's services providers;
- monitoring and resourcing licensed and/or funded children's services providers;
- providing information and training and development opportunities for providers;

- 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 quality assurance and the availability of services; and
- providing dispute resolution processes.

Total children's services expenditure by Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments was approximately \$1.3 billion in 1996–97. In 1995–96, their expenditure was approximately \$1.1 billion.²

Direct Commonwealth Government expenditure, which is comparable across years, totalled \$931 million in 1996–97, an increase of 5.3 per cent in real terms from the previous year.³ Income support payments such as Childcare Assistance and the Childcare Cash Rebate made up about 75 per cent of Commonwealth Government expenditure on children's services in 1995–96 and 1996–97.

The bulk of State and Territory Government expenditure was other recurrent expenditure on service provision (that is, funding paid to service providers) in 1996–97. Expenditure on assets was generally the second highest expenditure item. Across service types, preschool services generally accounted for the largest proportion of expenditure by State and Territory Governments, ranging from 78.5 per cent of expenditure in the ACT to 86.1 per cent in Queensland.

The Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments supported approximately 385 000 child care places and over 200 000 preschool places in 1996–97. Of the child care places, almost half (47.6 per cent) were CBLDC places, followed by outside school hours care (OSHC) places (18.8 per cent) and family day care (FDC) (16.3 per cent).

² The expenditure totals for both years were underestimates because they excluded expenditure on capital for child care services in Victoria; expenditure by the Education Department of WA on preschool services; and expenditure on child care services in Tasmania. They were also non-comparable because in 1995–96 the total also excluded expenditure on child care services in the ACT and expenditure on preschool services in Queensland, the ACT and the NT.

³ Direct Commonwealth Government expenditure comprised income support payments to parents and operational and capital subsidies to services. The latter were paid to providers directly or via specific purpose payments to State and Territory Governments which then distributed them to providers. The total of these payments overstated the Commonwealth Government contribution to government funded and/or provided children's services as it included Childcare Cash Rebate payments to parents for informal child care services.

11.2.2 Size of the sector

Child care services

As a complete data collection for all child care services was not available, it was not possible to quantify the full attendance at child care services. Based on available data, government funded and/or provided child care services were being accessed by at least 607 281 children at 30 June 1997. At 30 June 1996, at least 584 023 children accessed these services.⁴ Nationally, at least 18.0 per cent of children aged 12 years and younger attended these services in 1996–97. The proportions of children 12 years and younger attending these services by jurisdiction are also available, but were generally not comparable across jurisdictions or over time (Table 11.1).

Table 11.1: Proportion of total children in the population attending child care services, 1995–96 and 1996–97 (per cent)^a

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust ^f
1995–96	17.2 ^b	15.0 ^c	23.8	13.8 ^b	17.0	16.8 ^e	28.6	14.8 ^b	17.4
1996–97	19.8	17.1 ^c	24.1	13.8 ^b	16.2 ^d	17.0 ^e	30.2	16.0 ^b	18.0

a Children were defined as persons 12 years and younger.

b Excluded children attending some vacation care services.

c Excluded children attending some vacation care, before and after school hours care and occasional care services.

d Excluded children attending some long day care, vacation care and occasional care services.

e Excluded children attending some vacation care and occasional care services.

f Total children in Australia included children in other territories.

Sources: Tables 11A.1; 11A.2; 11A.17; 11A.23; 11A.27; 11A.33; 11A.40; 11A.45; 11A.49; 11A.56

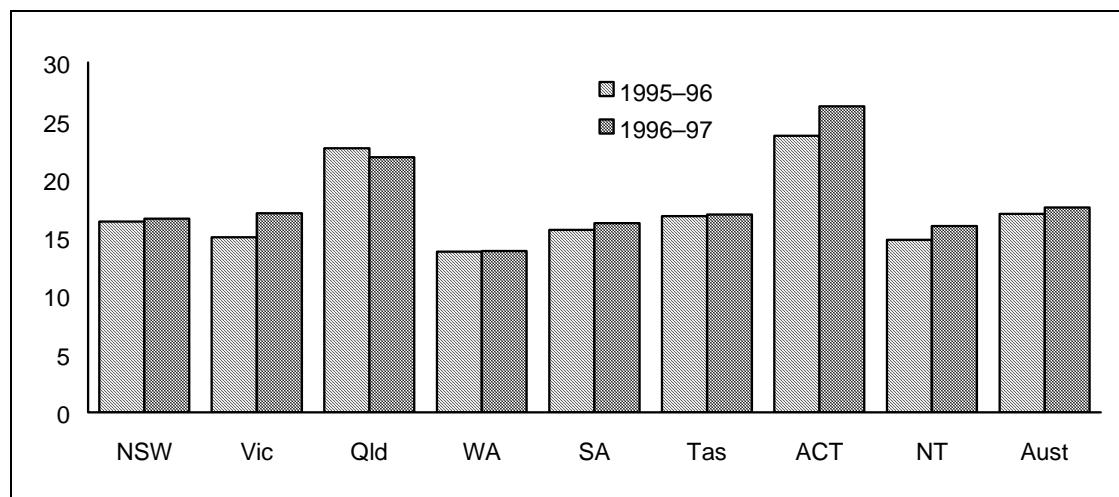
The relative participation across jurisdictions is at least partially indicated by data from the Commonwealth Government's census of child care services. This is the most complete data set on child care services in Australia. It includes most services receiving assistance from the Commonwealth Government. State and Territory Governments also contribute to supporting many of these services.

Nationally, 17.6 per cent of children 12 years and younger attended services included in the census of child care in 1996–97 (Figure 11.1). Approximately

⁴ The totals for children attending government funded and/or provided child care services for 1995–96 and 1996–97 were underestimates because they excluded children attending some services in Victoria, WA, Tasmania and the NT. They were also non-comparable because the total for 1995–96 excluded children attending some services in NSW, while the total for 1996–97 excluded children attending some services in SA.

26 per cent of children in the ACT and 21 per cent of children in Queensland attended, while the proportion ranged from 14 per cent to 16 per cent in other states and territories.

Figure 11.1: Proportion of total children in the population attending child care services included in the Commonwealth Government's census of child care, 1995–96 and 1996–97 (per cent)^{a,b}



a Children were defined as persons 12 years and younger.

b Total children in Australia included children in other territories.

Sources: Tables 11A.1; 11A.2

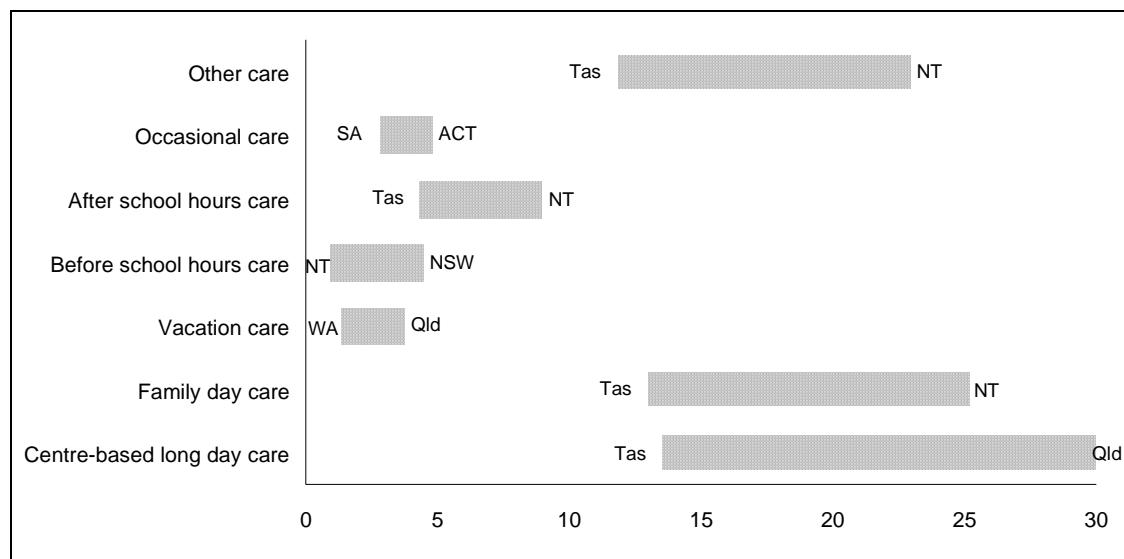
Nationally the proportion of children attending services included in the census of child care services increased by 0.6 percentage points between 1995–96 and 1996–97. The largest increases were recorded in Victoria (up 2.1 percentage points) and the ACT (up 2.5 percentage points). The proportion fell 0.5 percentage points in Queensland and remained relatively unchanged in NSW, WA, SA and Tasmania.

The census of child care services also provided an indication of the average hours of attendance of children in child care services in Australia and the fees charged for those services. Figure 11.2 shows the variation in average hours of attendance across jurisdictions. For example, average hours of attendance in CBLDC services ranged from 14 hours per week in Tasmania to 30 hours per week in Queensland.

Similarly, children attending vacation care services in Queensland spent over four days a week in care, on average, compared with children in WA who attended less than two days a week, on average. The smallest difference in

average hours of attendance was for occasional care services, where attendance ranged from 3.3 hours in SA to 5.3 hours in the ACT.

Figure 11.2: Average attendance at child care services included in the Commonwealth Government's census of child care, 1996–97 (hours per week per child attending)^a



a Data for vacation care were for average days of attendance.

Source: Table 11A.5

Generally, fees for up to 50 hours of CBLDC care ranged from \$136 per week in the NT to \$167 per week in the ACT. Fees for other care services (\$126 in Queensland to \$165 in SA) and FDC (\$116 in Queensland to \$133 in Tasmania). Fees for vacation care services ranged from \$55 per week in SA to \$90 per week in the ACT and the NT.

Fees for before school hours care services ranged from \$2.50 per session in the NT to \$4.58 in NSW, while sessional fees for after school hours care services ranged from \$5.21 in Queensland to \$8.19 in the NT. Fees for occasional care services ranged from \$2.48 per hour in SA to \$4.40 per hour in the NT.

Preschool services

Preschools provide a variety of educational and developmental programs, most commonly on a sessional basis for children in the year or two before they begin full-time schooling. There are significant variations across jurisdictions regarding the age at which children may attend. Preschool services in Victoria, Tasmania and the NT, for example, are only funded for children in the year immediately prior to the commencement of full-time schooling. By contrast, in SA and the ACT younger children may access preschool services under special circumstances. This disparity made it difficult to describe the sector on a nationally consistent basis.

To improve comparability across jurisdictions, preschool services were split into two categories for this Report:

- children attending preschool services in the year immediately prior to the commencement of full-time schooling (which were provided on a similar basis in all jurisdictions and for which jurisdictional comparisons were therefore useful); and
- younger children attending preschool services.

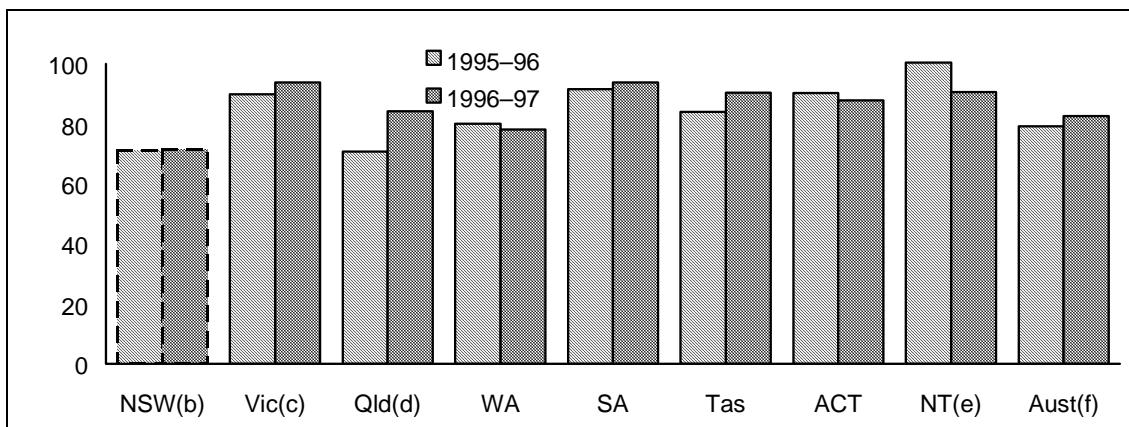
Approximately 214 000 of the children attending preschool services in 1996–97 were to begin full-time schooling the next year.⁵ The number of these children as a proportion of the number of total four year old children in the population (five year old children in WA) was generally consistent across jurisdictions — ranging from 78 per cent to 94 per cent of children in different jurisdictions (Figure 11.3).

For most states and territories, there was little change between 1995–96 and 1996–97 in the proportion of four year old children (five year old children in WA) attending preschool services in the year immediately prior to the commencement of full-time schooling. The exception was the NT (where it fell from 100 per cent to 91 per cent).⁶

⁵ This is an overstatement of the number of children attending preschool services in the year immediately prior to the commencement of full-time schooling as it includes younger children attending preschool services in NSW.

⁶ The rise in the proportion of children attending preschool services in Queensland between 1995–96 and 1996–97 was due to the inclusion of children attending community kindergartens in the data for 1996–97.

Figure 11.3: Proportion of total children in the population attending preschool services immediately prior to the commencement of full-time schooling, 1995–96 and 1996–97 (per cent)^a



a Preschool children were defined as persons aged 4 years in all states and territories except WA, where preschool children were defined as persons aged 5 years.

b Included children attending preschool services other than in the year prior to the commencement of full-time schooling.

c Included some children attending preschool services conducted in a child care centre.

d Data for 1995–96 excluded children attending community kindergartens.

e NT numbers for 1995–96 were as at August 1995 and for 1996–97 were as at August 1996.

f Total children in Australia included children in other territories.

Sources: Tables 11A.1; 11A.17; 11A.23; 11A.27; 11A.33; 11A.40; 11A.45; 11A.49; 11A.56

There was little variation across jurisdictions in the percentage of children attending preschool services in the year immediately prior to the commencement of full-time schooling, but there were large differences in the hours of attendance of children and the fees charged to parents. Average attendance at preschool in 1996–97 ranged from 6 hours per week in NSW to 17 hours per week in WA (Table 11.2).

For some states and territories, government-funded preschool services were provided at no cost to parents (Tasmania and the majority of services in Queensland) or fees were not compulsory (Victoria, SA and the ACT). Fees for preschool services were \$3.70 per week in NSW and \$0.90 in WA, while fees for kindergarten services in Queensland were \$28.00 a week.

Table 11.2: Fees and attendance for preschool services, 1996–97

	<i>Services offered to children in the year immediately prior to the commencement of full-time schooling</i>		<i>Services offered to younger children</i>	
	<i>Fees per week (\$)</i>	<i>Average attendance (hrs)</i>	<i>Fees per week (\$)</i>	<i>Average attendance (hrs)</i>
NSW	3.00 ^a	6.2	na	na
Vic	9.76 ^b	na	—	—
Qld	28.00 ^c	13.1	21.00	11.0
WA	0.23	17.2	5.00	5.3
SA	3.70 ^d	11.0	1.00 ^d	2.6
Tas	0	10.0	0	0
ACT	4.00 ^d	10.5	2.00 ^d	5.5
NT	na	na	0	0

na not available

— not applicable

a Average fee per hour

b The Victorian Government provides a Health Card Grant to services for families on low incomes. This grant is used to reduce the term fee for those families. All fees were voluntary.

c Average weekly fees for kindergartens. All state-funded preschool services are free.

d This was a voluntary contribution.

Sources: Tables 11A.19; 11A.24; 11A.28; 11A.35; 11A.41; 11A.46; 11A.50; 11A.57

Currently, younger children are able to access funded preschool services in NSW, Queensland, WA, SA and the ACT. In 1996–97, 30 485 younger children attended preschool services in Queensland, WA, SA and the ACT.⁷ Because policy regarding the access of younger children to preschools varied between states and territories, the participation of younger children in preschool services also varied. For example, in WA, where several preschool programs were available for younger children, 62.5 per cent of all four year old children attended preschool services. By contrast in SA, where preschool services are available to younger children with special needs, 23.0 per cent of three year old children attended preschool services.

Average attendance by younger children at preschools ranged from 11 hours per week in Queensland to 2.55 hours per week in SA. Fees for these preschool

⁷ In NSW younger children attending preschool services in NSW were included in the number of children attending services in the year immediately prior to the commencement of full-time schooling.

services ranged from \$21 per week in Queensland to \$1 per week in SA (Table 11.2).

11.2.3 Regulation of standards and quality

Operating standards and quality of care aspects of most children's services are addressed through licensing and monitoring of services (conducted by State and Territory Governments) and/or by quality related government funding requirements.

The types of services covered by legislation vary significantly across jurisdictions. While each jurisdiction has legislation governing the operation of child care centres, the application of the legislation to the various forms of child care varied, with some states and territories having different requirements for CBLDC and occasional care services. FDC legislation applies in NSW, Queensland, WA and SA. OSHC legislation applies only in the ACT.

Even where services are licensed, each jurisdiction sets its own minimum standards to which providers must adhere. To overcome some of the differences across jurisdictions, State and Territory Governments, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government, have developed national standards for CBLDC, FDC and OSHC.

Quality improvement processes are becoming more important as a means of increasing the quality of children's services. The Commonwealth Government introduced the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System in 1994, as a means of helping CBLDC services improve the quality of care provided to children. Centres are required to participate in the system to remain eligible for Childcare Assistance. Preliminary work is also being undertaken on the development of an accreditation system for FDC.

11.3 Recent developments in the sector

11.3.1 Staff training and experience

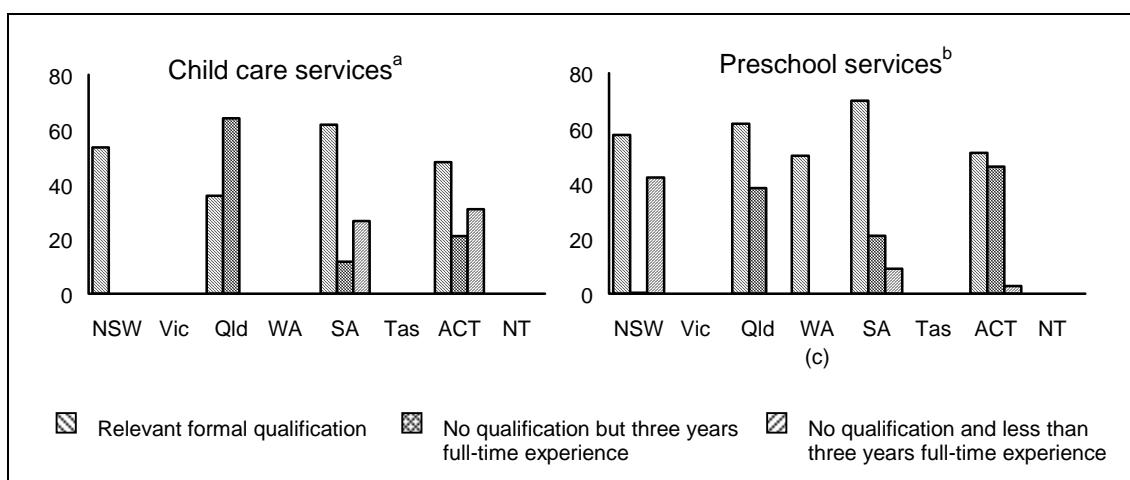
It has been argued that appropriate staff training and experience are key factors in influencing the quality of children's services (EPAC 1996). Consequently, there have been moves towards introducing requirements for qualified staff in licensing and quality assurance, and restructured awards which generally recognise formal qualifications (ACIRRT 1996).

The proportion of workers in Commonwealth supported child care services with relevant formal qualifications rose by 7 percentage points (to 40 per cent) between 1989 and 1992 (McNeice, Moyle and Meyer 1995). This proportion had risen to 63 per cent by 1995–96. Sixteen per cent of paid primary contact staff in 1995–96 had no formal qualifications but did have the equivalent of three years full-time work experience. The remaining 19 per cent had neither a formal qualification nor three years full-time experience.

More recent data were available for some services receiving funding from State and Territory Governments. These data indicated that in 1996–97:

- generally, staff with relevant formal qualifications represented the largest proportion of paid primary contact staff in these services (except in child care services in Queensland); and
- staff without relevant formal qualifications or the equivalent of three years full-time experience were more prevalent in child care services than in preschool services (Figure 11.4).

Figure 11.4: Training and experience of primary contact staff in some children's services, 1996–97 (per cent)



a Data were not available for Victoria, WA, Tasmania or the NT.

b Data were not available for Victoria, Tasmania or the NT.

c Data related to WA Department of Education preschool services only.

Sources: Tables 11A.18; 11A.29; 11A.34; 11A.42; 11A.51

11.3.2 Flexibility of children's services

The 1997 Report discussed the impact of the rise in female participation in the workforce on the demand for children's services. Other changes in working arrangements are also affecting the demand by working parents for children's services. The average working hours of full-time employees, for example, have risen from 39.8 hours per week in 1989–90 to 41.0 hours per week in 1996–97 (ABS 1997a). There is also evidence that shift arrangements are becoming more important, in response to changes such as the deregulation of retail trading hours and the introduction of 24 hour production runs (EPAC 1996).

These pressures to work outside 'standard' working hours have led to increased demand by working parents for children's services that provide non-standard hours of care. This is reflected in research into parents' views on the provision of children's services. Shiftworkers are demanding more overnight and early morning care, for example, while other working parents are demanding later closing times for services and longer sessions at preschools (Consumer Contact 1996).

The proportion of children's services providers that offer non-standard hours of care varied across service types and across jurisdictions in 1996–97.⁸ Generally, CBLDC services providers were most likely to offer non-standard hours of care, although the proportion ranged from 40.0 per cent in Tasmania to 83.8 per cent in Victoria. This was followed by before and after school hours care providers. By contrast very few 'other care' providers offered non-standard hours of care.

The proportion of preschool services offering the option of full-day and part-day services also varied significantly across jurisdictions, from 43.1 per cent in WA to 78.1 per cent in SA.

11.4 Framework of performance indicators

The framework of performance indicators for children's services is based on the common objective for children's services of all governments across Australia (Box 11.2).

8 Definitions of non-standard hours of care by service type are contained in Section 11A.4.

Box 11.2: Objective for children's services

Governments' common objective of children's services is to provide support for parents in caring for their children by ensuring that the care and education needs of children are met in a safe and nurturing environment.

A set of ten indicators has been identified to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the system that provides children's services (Figure 11.5). The framework is similar to the one developed for the 1997 Report, but indicators and descriptors have been refined for this Report. A description of all indicators is provided in Attachment 11A.

The quality of comparative performance information available has improved since the previous Report (SCRCSSP 1997). For example, data on administrative costs are now reported on a consistent basis across all jurisdictions, allowing meaningful comparisons of such costs.

Other improvements have been made to definitions and counting rules for future collections, although timing differences in data collections mean that these improvements will only become apparent over time. In addition, all jurisdictions are working towards improving the availability of data and improving comparability by establishing a uniform reference period for the 2000 Report.

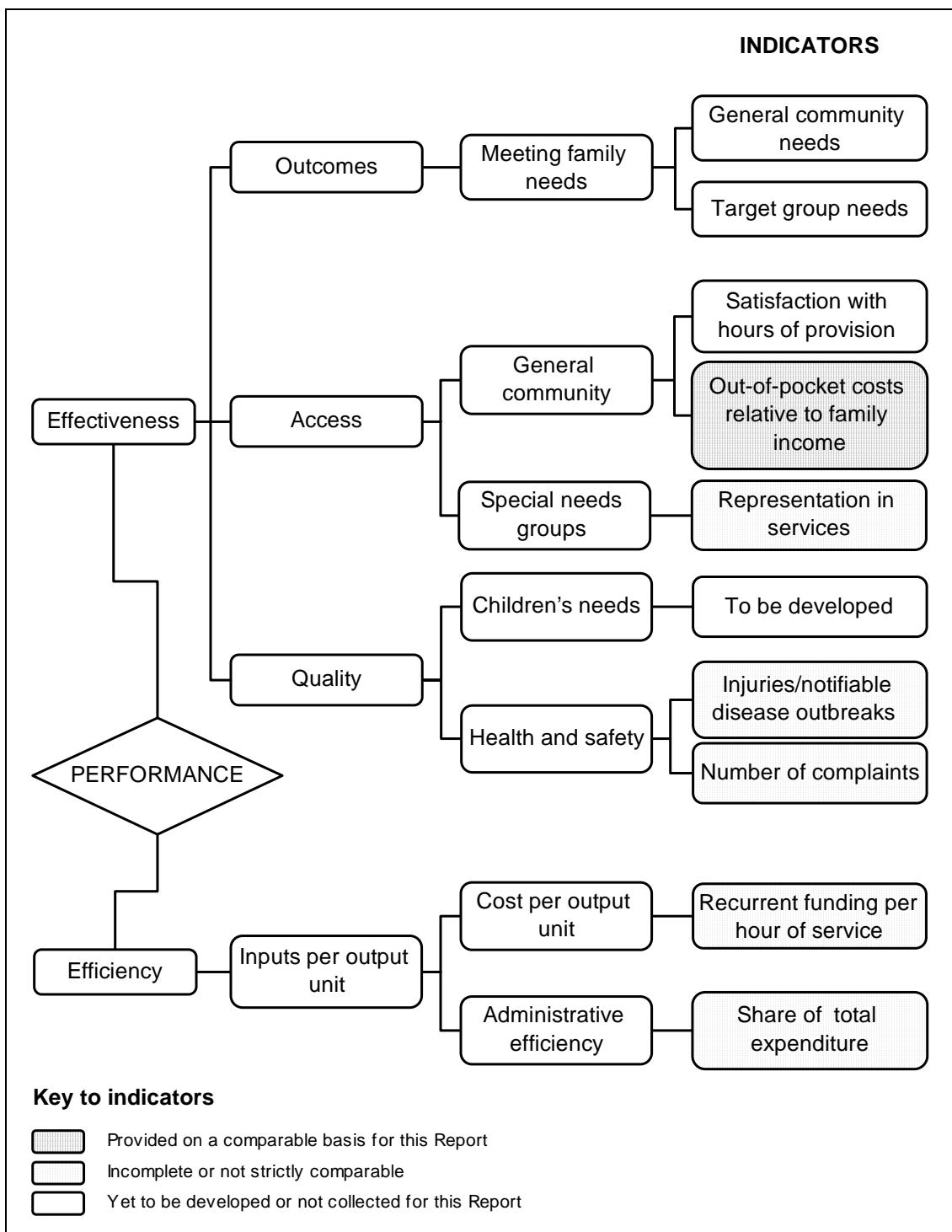
Given these changes in descriptors and indicators, care must be taken when comparing data across years.

11.5 Future directions

11.5.1 Appropriateness and completeness of the indicator set

Information on the extent to which services met the needs of parents was not available for this Report, but a parental satisfaction survey is proposed to allow reporting on this issue in the next Report. The aim will be to measure the extent to which services meet the needs of parents and special needs groups, and the level of parental satisfaction with hours of operation.

Figure 11.5: Performance indicators for children's services



11.5.2 Content of the data set

The operation and administration of children's services varied significantly across jurisdictions, making it difficult to obtain data on a comparable basis. To improve comparability, the period for data collection is targeted to be standardised for future Reports.

There are also some discrepancies in the financial data as a result of differences in the treatment of various expenditure items (for example, superannuation). These issues are being addressed, leading to the reporting of more comparable data in future years.

11.6 Key performance results

Data were collected for effectiveness and efficiency. No updated data on out-of-pocket costs by jurisdiction (an indicator of effectiveness) were available from that presented in the 1997 Report (SCRCSSP 1997). However, some data was available from the ABS Survey of Child Care.

Thirty per cent of children attending formal child care services at March 1996 did so at a cost to parents of less than \$10 per week. For a further 15.4 per cent of children, the weekly cost of formal child care services was \$60 or more. The majority of children (53.7 per cent) attending formal child care services did so at a weekly cost to parents of between \$10 and \$59 (ABS 1997c).

11.6.1 Effectiveness — access to child care services

The representation of children from special needs group in the attendees of child care services is an important indicator of the access these groups have to mainstream child care services. All available information on the representation of children from these special needs groups in government funded and/or provided child care services is presented in Table 11.3. Because these data were incomplete, it was not possible to draw comparisons across groups or over time. It is hoped to develop a more complete and comparable data set in future years.

Table 11.3: Proportion of child care attendees from special needs groups, 1995–96 to 1996–97 (per cent)^a

	<i>Representation in attendees at child care services</i>		<i>Representation in the community</i>
	<i>1995–96</i>	<i>1996–97</i>	
Children from non-English speaking backgrounds	9.6 ^c	9.6 ^d	3.3 ^b
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	1.9 ^c	1.8 ^d	3.7 ^b
Children from single parent families	20.8 ^e	20.4 ^f	15.7 ^b
Children with a disability	2.6 ^e	2.7 ^c	6.7 ^g
Children from rural and remote areas	na	22.1 ^c	17.3 ^b

na not available

a Comparisons between the representation of children from special needs groups in attendees of child care services and their representation in the community should be treated with caution due to definitional differences.

b Representation in the community related to 1996.

c Excluded children attending some services in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, Tasmania and the NT.

d Excluded children attending some services in NSW, Victoria, WA, SA, Tasmania and the NT.

e Excluded children attending some services in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA, Tasmania, and the NT.

f Excluded children attending some services in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA, Tasmania, the ACT and the NT.

g Representation in the community related to 1993.

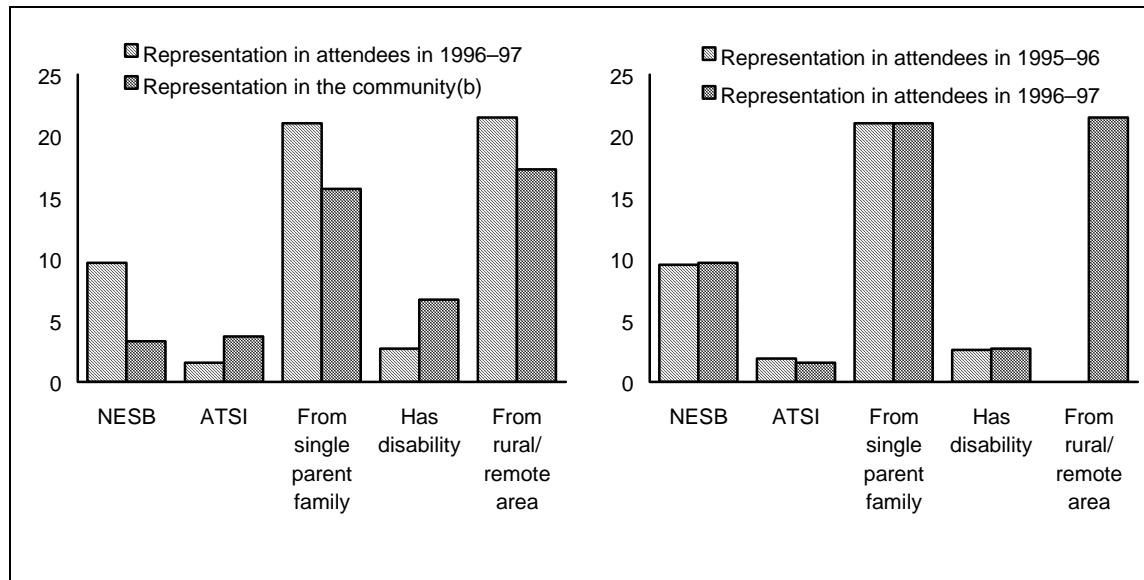
Source: Table 11A.11

Comparable data were available on the participation of children from special needs groups in attendees of a subset of government funded and/or provided child care services — those included in the Commonwealth Government's census of child care services. For these services, the representations of children from non-English speaking backgrounds, from single parent families and from rural and remote areas in attendees were above their representations in the community as a whole in 1996–97 (Figure 11.6).⁹

The representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with a disability in attendees of these child care services, however, were below their representations in the community.

⁹ Comparisons between the representation of children from special needs groups in attendees of children's services and their representation in the community should be treated with caution due to definitional differences.

Figure 11.6: Proportion of attendees of child care services included in the census of child care from special needs groups, 1995–96 and 1996–97 (per cent)^a



a Comparisons between the representation of children from special needs groups in attendees of child care services and their representation in the community should be treated with caution due to definitional differences.

b Representation of children from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from single parent families and children from rural and remote areas in the community related to 1996. Representation of children with a disability in the community related to 1993.

Source: Table 11A.12

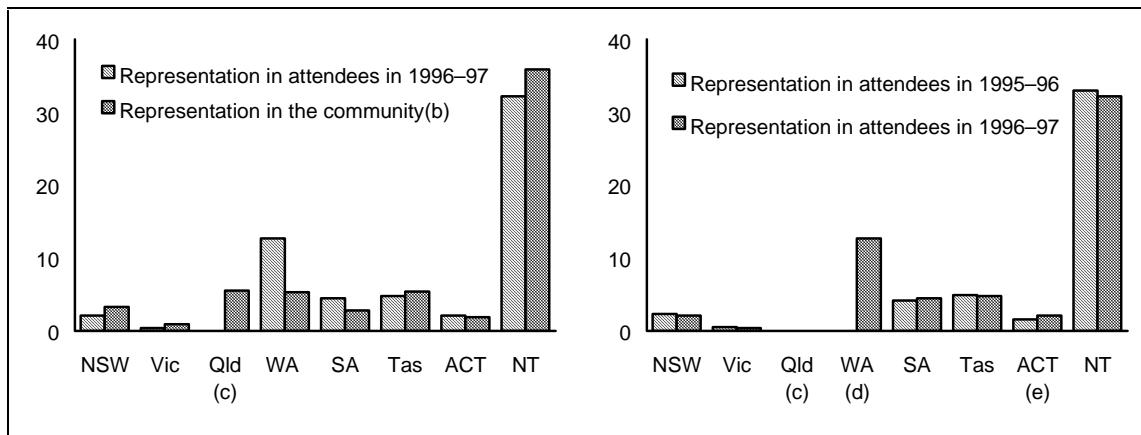
There was little change in the representation of children from special needs groups in attendees of child care services included in the Commonwealth Government's census of child care services between 1995–96 and 1996–97 (Figure 11.6). The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attending fell in all states and territories except the ACT, while the representation of children with a disability remained relatively unchanged in Victoria, Queensland and WA, fell in Tasmania, and rose in all other jurisdictions. Changes in the proportion of attendees from non-English speaking backgrounds and from single parent families varied significantly across jurisdictions (Table 11A.12).

11.6.2 Effectiveness — access to preschool services

Availability of data on the proportion of special needs groups using preschool services varied across jurisdictions and special needs groups. However, most states and territories provided information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attending preschool services. Generally, their representation in attendees of preschool services was consistent with their representation in the

total population (Figure 11.7). Moreover, their representation was similar in 1995–96 and 1996–97 in each jurisdiction.

Figure 11.7: Proportion of preschool attendees from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, 1995–96 and 1996–97 (per cent)^a



a Comparisons between the representation of children from special needs groups in attendees of child care services and their representation in the community should be treated with caution due to definitional differences.

b Data related to 1996.

c Data on representation in preschool attendees were not available.

d Data on representation in preschool attendees in 1995–96 were not available. Data for 1996–97 excluded preschools funded by the Department of Family and Children's Services.

e Data for 1996–97 included children attending early entry program.

Sources: Tables 11A.21; 11A.26; 11A.31; 11A.38; 11A.44; 11A.48; 11A.53; 11A.59

Only NSW, SA and the ACT provided data on attendance in preschool services of children from non-English speaking backgrounds — their representation in attendees was higher than their representation in the community in 1996–97. Similarly, the participation of children from rural and remote areas was above their representation in the community for those jurisdictions that provided data (NSW, SA and Tasmania) (Tables 11A.21; 11A.44; 11A.48).

11.6.3 Effectiveness — quality

The health and safety of children is an important aspect of the quality of children's services. Indicators of this were the number of serious injuries sustained and the number of notifiable outbreaks of disease per registered or licensed service. However, data for these indicators were not generally

available, with only WA and the ACT providing limited data.¹⁰ Only two children attending CBLDC, FDC, occasional care and preschool services in WA sustained a serious injury in 1996–97.¹¹ ACT data were only available for preschool services, which reported one serious injury in 1996–97.

Another measure of quality was the number of complaints and alleged breaches of regulations made to State and Territory Government regulatory bodies.¹⁰ Only WA, the ACT and the NT were able to supply data on this indicator.

In WA, there was one substantiated complaint for every 16.7 registered or licensed CBLDC, FDC, occasional care and preschool service in 1996–97.¹¹ In the ACT there was one complaint for every 8.6 registered or licensed child care and preschool services, while in the NT, there was one alleged or substantiated complaint for every 1.6 CBLDC services.

11.6.4 Efficiency

Some differences in indicator results for jurisdictions may reflect different counting and reporting rules for generating financial data. Differences may also reflect the treatment of various expenditure items (for example, superannuation).

Unit cost

The main indicator of efficiency of children's services is government recurrent expenditure per hour of service. Data were sought from all governments on their expenditures by service type (Table 11.4). However, the available data were incomplete making comparisons of expenditure across services types and over time difficult. It is hoped more complete data will be available for future Reports.

¹⁰ These data included children's services that do not receive any form of government assistance.

¹¹ These data included private home-based carers not attached to a FDC scheme.

Table 11.4: Commonwealth and State and Territory Government recurrent expenditure, 1995–96 and 1996–97 (\$ per hour of service in 1996–97 dollars)^a

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Long day care	1995–96	na	1.17	na	1.27	na	na	1.37
	1996–97	1.32	1.19	1.33	1.29	na	0.85	1.55
Family day care	1995–96	1.53	1.99	2.27	2.24 ^b	na	1.53	1.75
	1996–97	1.49	1.77	2.12	2.00 ^b	2.36	1.47	1.69
Vacation care	1995–96	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
	1996–97	na	na	0.01	0.39	na	0.17	2.52
Outside school hours care ^c	1995–96	0.62	na	0.64	0.87	na	na	0.61
	1996–97	0.73	na	0.73	0.90	0.96	0.50	0.72
Occasional care	1995–96	na	na	na	na	na	na	12.31
	1996–97	1.74	na	1.79	3.23	na	1.44	12.17
Other care	1995–96	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
	1996–97	na	na	na	na	na	na	na

na not available

a Commonwealth Government expenditure data excluded administration expenditure.

b Expenditure by the State Government on FDC included costs associated with licensing private home-based carers not attached to a FDC scheme.

c Disaggregated data were not available for before school hours care and after school hours care.

Source: Table 11A.16

Some comparable data was available on Commonwealth Government recurrent expenditure by service type. Based on this, occasional care services generally recorded the highest level of Commonwealth Government recurrent funding per hour of service across states and territories in 1996–97 (\$1.37 per hour in the ACT to \$11.51 per hour in the NT). Outside school hours care services generally recorded the lowest hourly expenditure (\$0.54 per hour in the ACT to \$0.77 per hour in SA). Moreover, between 1995–96 and 1996–97 there was very little change in real hourly expenditure across service types and across jurisdictions (Table 11.5).

Table 11.5: Commonwealth Government recurrent expenditure on child care services, 1995–96 and 1996–97 (\$ per hour of service in 1996–97 dollars)^a

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Long day care	1995–96	1.23	1.17	1.31	1.25	1.20	1.34	0.76	1.11
	1996–97	1.23	1.16	1.32	1.27	1.16	1.36	0.81	1.25
Family day care	1995–96	1.53	1.99	2.27	2.22	2.71	2.16	1.53	1.75
	1996–97	1.49	1.77	2.12	1.99	2.25	2.28	1.47	1.69
Vacation care	1995–96	na							
	1996–97	na							
Outside school hours care ^b	1995–96	0.62	0.65	0.64	0.74	0.63	0.55	0.21	0.61
	1996–97	0.73	0.74	0.73	0.74	0.77	0.59	0.54	0.72
Occasional care	1995–96	2.67	2.34	2.07	2.97	3.04	2.31	1.36	11.64
	1996–97	3.19	2.16	1.98	2.78	3.78	1.48	1.37	11.51
Other care	1995–96	na							
	1996–97	na							

na not available

a Expenditure excluded administration expenditure.

b Disaggregated data were not available for before school hours care and after school hours care.

Source: Table 11A.14

Data on recurrent expenditure per hour of service were available for preschool services in NSW, Queensland, WA and the ACT for 1996–97. Recurrent expenditure per hour of service ranged from \$1.80 in NSW to \$3.40 in Queensland.

Administration costs

Another measure of efficiency is administration expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure. Again these data were incomplete, making comparisons across jurisdictions and over time difficult. It is hoped more complete data will be available for future Reports.

Administration costs accounted for 1.4 per cent of total Commonwealth Government expenditure in 1996–97, compared with 2.0 per cent in 1995–96 (Table 11.6).

Table 11.6: Administration expenditure as a share of total expenditure — Commonwealth and State and Territory Government expenditure on children's services, 1995–96 and 1996–97 (per cent)

	<i>Child care</i>		<i>Preschool</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	1995–96	1996–97	1995–96	1996–97	1995–96	1996–97
Comm	2.0	1.4	—	—	—	—
NSW	na	na	na	na	7.9	9.2
Vic	na	na	na	na	5.5	4.8
Qld	23.6	17.5	na	4.0	na	5.8
WA	25.2 ^a	23.6 ^a	11.2 ^b	12.8 ^b	15.4 ^b	16.5 ^b
SA	na	na	na	na	na	5.5
Tas	na	na	na	na	na	na
ACT	na	15.9	na	2.8	na	6.0
NT	14.0	13.2	na	na	na	na

na not available

— not applicable

a Different methods were used to calculate administrative expenditure on child care services in 1995–96 and 1996–97. Expenditure by the State Government also included costs of licensing private home-based carers not attached to a FDC scheme.

b Excluded expenditure by the Education Department of WA.

Sources: Tables 11A.9; 11A.20; 11A.25; 11A.30; 11A.36; 11A.43; 11A.47; 11A.52; 11A.58

As discussed earlier, the roles of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments differ in relation to funding and provision of children's services. In particular, State and Territory Governments have an important role in licensing services and monitoring standards. For this reason, it is not appropriate to draw comparisons between the administrative costs of the Commonwealth Government and the State and Territory Governments.

Queensland, WA, the ACT and the NT provided information on the administration costs of their child care services in 1995–96 and 1996–97. Administration costs as a proportion of total expenditure for child care services in these jurisdictions ranged from 23.6 per cent in WA to 13.2 per cent in the NT in 1996–97 (Table 11.6).

Queensland and the NT recorded falls in the proportion of total expenditure spent on administration between 1995–96 and 1996–97. A larger fall was recorded in Queensland than in the NT (Table 11.6).¹²

Queensland, WA and the ACT provided data on the administration costs of their preschool services. Administration costs ranged from 2.8 per cent of total expenditure in the ACT to 12.8 per cent in WA in 1996–97 (Table 11.6).

For NSW, Victoria and SA administration expenditure related to child care and preschool services accounted for 9.2 per cent, 4.8 per cent and 5.5 per cent respectively of total expenditure. Between 1995–96 and 1996–97, the administration cost of children's services rose in NSW by 1.3 percentage points and fell by 0.7 percentage points in Victoria.

¹² In WA, different methods were used to calculate administrative expenditure in 1995–96 and 1996–97. For this reason, it was not appropriate to comment on the change in administration costs over the period.