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## 2 Recent developments in the Report

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### **2.1 Developments in reporting**

This is the seventeenth Report on Government Services (RoGS) produced by the Review. Each year, the Review endeavours to build on developments of previous years. Major enhancements to the RoGS fall into four categories:

- the inclusion of new performance indicators and reporting against indicators for the first time
- improvements to the meaningfulness and/or clarity of existing performance indicators
- improvements to the data reported against existing performance indicators, including:
  - improved comparability, timeliness and/or quality of data
  - expanded reporting for special needs groups (such as Indigenous Australians)
  - improved reporting of full costs to government.
- improvements to information reported about data quality.

Improvements to specific areas of the RoGS are summarised in each chapter.

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## The review of the RoGS

COAG agreed at its 7 December 2009 meeting to recommendations of a Senior Officials and Heads of Treasuries Working Group review of the RoGS. The review examined the ongoing usefulness of the RoGS to its government, non-government and community stakeholders. Developments arising from the review will continue to be implemented over the next two editions.

The review noted the central role of the RoGS in reporting comparative information on government performance, and that:

- the RoGS' original role as a tool for government had been complemented by a public accountability function
- the preponderance of submissions to the review were very supportive of the RoGS, but there was scope for improvement in the comparability, timeliness, and quality of performance data
- some submissions suggested the RoGS' scope be expanded to include government services that are not currently reported.

The review recommended that new terms of reference be prepared for the Review of Government Service Provision (subsequently endorsed by COAG 2010; [www.pc.gov.au/gsp/review/tor](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/review/tor)), and set out a series of activities for the Steering Committee over the next few years:

- by the end of 2010 (in time for the 2012 RoGS), the Steering Committee, with an independent six member reference group drawn from First Ministers and Treasury officials, to review the RoGS general performance indicator framework (PIF) and individual performance indicators, to determine their consistency with the characteristics of performance indicators as defined in the IGA. An Independent Reference Group was formed in early-2010 and its three stage work program is completed, comprising (1) a desktop review of the general PIF, (2) a review of indicators and associated measures against the IGA characteristics and (3) development of formal Data Quality Information (DQI) for each indicator.
- during 2011, the Steering Committee to develop a set of formal criteria to determine whether the RoGS should include particular service sectors in its reporting regime — the criteria are completed and with COAG for endorsement
- every three years (commencing at the end of 2011-12), the Steering Committee to review the operation of RoGS and report to COAG. The Steering Committee has established an annual internal reporting process to inform the three-yearly report to COAG.

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Other review recommendations aimed to enhance the RoGS' accessibility. The 2012 RoGS contains sector summaries for all six broad reporting areas, in preparation for a future streamlined hard-copy report, and the Steering Committee is investigating possible improvements to the electronic publication of the RoGS and associated data and DQI.

Improvements to the 2012 RoGS flowing from review of RoGS recommendations include:

- introduction of sector summaries for all six broad reporting areas
- inclusion of mini-case studies in police services and emergency management
- introduction of DQI for additional indicators and updating of previously reported DQI
- further extension of time series reporting in some service areas.

## **2.2 Key data issues**

Notwithstanding the 'Improvements in reporting' section (above), there remains scope to improve reporting, both by addressing gaps in reporting, and by improving the timeliness, comparability and quality of reported data.

### **Gaps in reporting**

An examination of reporting across service areas identified the following gaps:

- There continues to be a paucity of information about cost-effectiveness (that is, measures of cost per outcome achieved). The lack of cost-effectiveness data partly reflects the difficulty of collecting robust quantitative information on outcomes.
- There are relatively few indicators of output quality, compared to the number of indicators for other output characteristics (effectiveness, access and appropriateness).

The Steering Committee has identified the following ongoing data issues that affect the quality of information in the RoGS: timeliness of data; comparability of data; changes to administrative data collections; full costing of government services; and reporting of data for special needs groups.

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## Timeliness

As noted in chapter 1, recent data are more useful for policy decision making but there can be a trade-off between the accuracy of data and their timeliness. The Steering Committee's approach is to publish imperfect data with caveats on an annual basis wherever possible. This approach allows increased scrutiny of the data and reveals the gaps in critical information, providing the foundation for developing better data over time. Table 2.1 summarises the time periods for data included in this RoGS. The following items are of particular note:

- Some data for literacy and numeracy are sourced from *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey 2006* (ABS 2008 and unpublished).
- Timeliness of deaths in custody data sourced from the Australian Institute of Criminology's *Deaths in Custody* collection has been improved. Moving to a financial year disaggregation has enabled provision of 2010-11 data.
- The most recent maternity services quality data are for 2009.
- Data for management of asthma are sourced from the ABS *National Health Survey*, which is conducted approximately every three years. The most recent data available are for 2007-08.
- All data for specialised mental health services are provided one year in arrears (that is, 2009-10 data for the 2012 RoGS).
- Data for users of specialist disability services are provided one year in arrears (that is, 2009-10 data for the 2012 RoGS). Data for social participation of people with disability are sourced from the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, which has been conducted approximately every six years (but is moving to a three-yearly cycle). Data from the 2009 survey were available for the first time for the 2012 RoGS.
- The most recent data on the amenity/location and customer satisfaction of State owned and managed Indigenous housing are for 2007. Data for net recurrent cost per dwelling and rent collection rate for community housing, and all data for Indigenous community housing are provided one year in arrears (2009-10 data for the 2012 RoGS).
- Data for homelessness services (formerly the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program [SAAP]), are provided one year in arrears (that is, 2009-10 data for the 2012 RoGS) and data for Australians who are homeless are available infrequently, with the most recent available data for 2006.

**Table 2.1 Time period of reported performance results, 2012 RoGS**

<i>Service area/indicator framework</i>	<i>At or earlier than 2008 or 2008-09</i>	<i>Previous year (2009 or 2009-10)</i>	<i>Current year (2010 or 2010-11)</i>	
<b>Early childhood education and training</b>	Early childhood, education and training	Literacy and numeracy (2006); Selected VET qualifications by Indigenous status (2006); Indigenous status (population data are for 2009); Participation in employment education and training; Year 12 or equivalent, or Certificate II; Without qualifications at or above Certificate III	Most government expenditure; Proportion of children developmentally on track in language and cognitive skills as they enter school	Selected government expenditure measures; All others
	Children's services	Preschool services costs; Family work related needs; Demand for formal care	Hospital separations	All others
	School education	Learning outcomes — Information and communication technologies; Completion rate (year 10)	School expenditure; Participation — achievement of VET competencies; Learning outcomes — Science literacy	All others
	VET	..	Number of VET qualifications completed (Skill profile); Employer engagement with VET; Employer satisfaction with VET	All others
<b>Justice</b>	Justice	..	Crime victimisation; Higher court defendants resulting in a guilty plea or finding	All others
	Police services	..	Victims of homicide; Crime victimisation; Reporting rates; Outcomes of investigations; Land transport hospitalisations; Defendants resulting in a guilty plea or finding	All others
	Court administration	..	..	All
	Corrective services	..	..	All
<b>Emergency management</b>	Emergency management		Deaths from emergency events	All others
	Fire events	Level of safe fire practices in the community; residential structures with smoke alarms	Fire deaths from all causes (combined); Fire injuries	Deaths from landscape fires
	Ambulance events	..	Emergency department patients by arrival method	All others
	Road rescue events	..	..	All

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**Table 2.1 (continued)**

<i>Service area/indicator framework</i>	<i>At or earlier than 2008 or 2008-09</i>	<i>Previous year (2009 or 2009-10)</i>	<i>Current year (2010 or 2010-11)</i>	
<b>Health</b>	Health	Health workforce; Access to services compared to need by type of service; Health risk factors	All others	Mortality rates; Life expectancy; Median age at death
	Public hospitals	..	All others	Patient satisfaction; Emergency department waiting times; Total elective surgery waiting times
	Maternity services	Recurrent cost per maternity separation	All others	Caesareans and Inductions for selected primiparae; Apgar scores
	Primary and community health <sup>a</sup>	Management of asthma	Selected potentially preventable hospitalisations — Potentially preventable hospitalisations for vaccine preventable, acute and chronic conditions; Hospitalisations for diabetes; Hospitalisations of older people for falls. Availability of public dentists; Influenza vaccination coverage for older people; Participation in breast, and cervical, cancer screening.	All others
	Mental health management	Social and economic inclusion of people with a mental illness; Prevalence of mental disorders	All	Rates of licit and illicit drug use; Primary mental health care for children and young people

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Table 2.1 (continued)

Service area/indicator framework	At or earlier than 2008 or 2008-09	Previous year (2009 or 2009-10)	Current year (2010 or 2010-11)	
<b>Community services</b>	Aged care services	..	Longer care arrangements; selected adverse events in residential aged care; Long term aged care in public hospitals; Complaints; Cost per output unit	All others
	Services for people with disability	..	All others	Administrative efficiency
	Child protection and out-of-home care	..	..	All
	Juvenile justice	..	Average rates of young people under juvenile justice supervision (both in detention and in the community) <sup>b</sup>	All others
<b>Housing and homelessness services</b>	Housing and homelessness	Australians who are homeless (2006); Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions (2008); Indigenous households living in houses of an acceptable standard (2008)	Low income households in rental stress	..
	Social housing	Dwelling condition for ICH (2006); Amenity/location, Customer satisfaction for SOMIH (2007)	Net recurrent cost per dwelling and rent collection rate for community housing; All indicators for ICH (except dwelling condition)	All indicators for public housing and SOMIH (except amenity/location and customer satisfaction)
	Homelessness services (formerly Supported Accommodation Assistance Program [SAAP])	..	All others	Some financial data

GP = general practitioner. ICH = Indigenous community housing. SOMIH = State-owned and managed housing. <sup>a</sup> Asthma management data are from a survey conducted approximately every three years. The most recent available data are from the 2007-08 survey. <sup>b</sup> Previous year juvenile justice material is the profile data for the JJ NMDS that is delayed by one year. All the performance indicator data are current year. .. Not applicable.

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## Comparability of data

Data are generally considered to be directly comparable when definitions, counting rules and the scope of measurement are consistent (and if applicable, the sample size is large enough to be statistically reliable — explained in the statistical appendix). Performance indicator framework (PIF) diagrams in each chapter are shaded to reflect indicator comparability. Table 2.2 summarises the proportions of performance indicators in each service area (1) with comparable data and (2) with data reported, both comparable and not directly comparable. Of the 19 service area PIFs, 12 have over 50 per cent of indicators reported on a comparable basis.

Table 2.2 reports on indicators with data reported. It does not reflect the work undertaken to identify new indicators and associated measures, develop definitions and counting rules and identify relevant data collections. In addition, table 2.2 does not capture other aspects of improvements in reporting, for example:

- streamlining PIFs, by including previously separate indicators as measures under an overarching indicator, which reduces the number of indicators, without reducing the information available
- splitting of some indicators, as indicators and measures develop
- refining DQI, counting rules, data collection and data completeness, but without changing the overall status of an indicator
- replacing previously reported indicators with more meaningful indicators
- changing the scope of reporting to reflect changes to government policy priorities. In this RoGS, as a result of implementing the IRG's recommendations:
  - two frameworks have been removed — breast cancer detection and management and its 14 performance indicators (of which 50 per cent were comparable) and Commonwealth Rent Assistance and its ten performance indicators (of which 90 per cent were comparable)
  - three frameworks have been merged into one social housing framework — public housing and SOMIH (of which 100 per cent were comparable), community housing (of which 20 per cent were comparable) and Indigenous community housing (of which 11 per cent were comparable). Overall, 29 indicators were streamlined into 11 indicators, without reducing the information available.

Table 2.2 shows that, overall, 52.6 per cent (or 142) of the 270 indicators are comparable. Notwithstanding that there have been significant changes to PIF's since the 2011 RoGS, this proportion is similar to that of the 2011 RoGS, where 54.7 per cent (or 175) of the 320 indicators were comparable.

**Table 2.2 Comparability of indicators, 2012 RoGS<sup>a, b</sup>**

<i>Service area indicator framework (year first reported)</i>	<i>Indicators reported on a comparable basis</i>		<i>Total indicators</i>
	<i>no.</i>	<i>% of all reported</i>	<i>no.</i>
<i>Early childhood, education and training</i>			
Children's services (1997)	13	59.1	22
School education (1995)	5	62.5	8
Vocational education and training (1995)	10	83.3	12
<i>Justice</i>			
Police services (1995)	14	73.7	19
Court administration (1995)	4	66.7	6
Corrective services (1995)	10	83.3	12
<i>Emergency management</i>			
Fire events (1998)	2	18.2	11
Road rescue events (2004)	1	6.3	16
Ambulance events (1998)	2	25.0	8
<i>Health</i>			
Public hospitals (1995)	5	35.7	14
Maternity services (2001)	2	25.0	8
Primary and community health (1999)	21	91.3	23
Mental health management (1999)	12	60.0	20
<i>Community services</i>			
Aged care services (1997)	11	64.7	17
Services for people with disability (1997)	9	64.3	14
Child protection and out-of-home care (1995)	4	20.0	20
Juvenile justice (2009)	4	28.6	14
<i>Housing and homelessness</i>			
Social housing (1995 to 2008)	1	100	11
Homelessness services (1995)	12	80	15
<b>Total or average</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>52.6</b>	<b>270</b>

<sup>a</sup> Changes can reflect merging of some indicators and splitting of others, as indicators and measures develop. Data do not capture changes in indicators over time, or replacement of indicators with more meaningful indicators. <sup>b</sup> Information is based only on indicators with data reported and does not reflect many conceptual developments. ... Not applicable. – Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: SCRCSSP (1995–2002); SCRGSP (2003–2011a).

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## Changes to administrative data collections

The discontinuation of data sets and the establishment of new data sets have implications for performance reporting by the Review. Time series comparisons, scope, comparability and accuracy of data can be affected. There can be, for example, significant delays between data collection and the public release of data from new data sets, and implementation problems can affect data quality for several years. This can affect reporting scope and data quality for some time, until new data sets are fully operational.

Major data developments currently underway will improve the quality of reporting in RoGS in the future:

- for children's services — under the National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care (NIA ECEC), an Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set (ECEC NMDS) is being implemented, which provides a framework for collecting a set of nationally comparable data for child care and preschool services. The ECEC NMDS is being developed by the AIHW, under the guidance of the Early Childhood Data Sub Group (ECDSG) — a working group that operates under the auspices of the MCEECDYA. The ABS, in partnership with the Australian Government and the State and Territory Governments, has established a National ECEC Data Collection (Preschool Education Australia), based on the ECEC NMDS. The first issue of the annual publication was released in early 2011 (ABS 2011)
- for homelessness services — the specialist homelessness services (SHS) data collection became operational on 1 July 2011. Reported SAAP/homelessness services data currently lag by one year (that is, data for 2009-10 data were provided for the 2012 RoGS) and improving data timeliness is a high priority. Data from the SHS collection are not yet available for reporting, but data for 2011-12 are expected to be available for the 2013 RoGS.

## Costing of services

In addition to the Review objective that expenditure on services be measured and reported on a comparable basis, a further objective of the Review is that efficiency estimates reflect the full costs to government. The Review has identified three priority areas for improving the comparability of unit costs, and developed appropriate guidelines in each case:

- including superannuation on an accrual basis (SCRCSSP 1998a)
- accounting for differences in the treatment of payroll tax (SCRCSSP 1999a)
- including the full range of capital costs (SCRCSSP 2001).

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Other issues influence the comparability of cost estimates. Where possible, the Review has sought to ensure consistency in:

- accounting for the goods and services tax (GST)
- reporting accrued benefits to employees (such as recreation and long service leave)
- apportioning applicable departmental overhead costs
- reporting non-government sourced revenue.

Reforms to treasury and finance department accounting guidelines in most jurisdictions require government agencies to adopt accrual accounting in their financial reporting frameworks. Accrual accounting is based on the principle that the agency recognises revenue and expenses when they are earned and incurred, respectively. Cash accounting, in contrast, recognises revenue and expenses when they are collected and paid, respectively. The majority of agencies and jurisdictions have adopted accrual accounting. Table 2.3 provides an overview of the Review's progress in reporting on an accrual basis, meeting the principle of reporting full cost to government (incorporating depreciation and the user cost of capital) and adjusting for differences in superannuation and payroll tax.

The Steering Committee's preference is to remove payroll tax from reported cost figures, where feasible, so cost differences between jurisdictions are not caused by differences in jurisdictions' payroll tax policies. In some chapters, however, it has not been possible to separately identify payroll tax, so a hypothetical amount is included in cost estimates for exempt services.

### *Capital costs*

Under accrual accounting, the focus is on the capital used (or consumed) in a particular year, rather than on the cash expenditure incurred in its purchase (for example, the purchase costs of a new building). Capital costs comprise two distinct elements:

- depreciation — defined as the annual consumption of non-current physical assets used in delivering government services
- the user cost of capital — the opportunity cost of funds tied up in the capital used to deliver services (that is, the return that could be generated if the funds were employed in their next best use), calculated as 8 per cent of the value of physical, non-current assets.

**Table 2.3 Progress of unit cost comparability, 2012 RoGS**

Service area/indicator framework	Accounting regime <sup>a</sup>	Full cost to government — element included			
		Depreciation	User cost of capital	Superannuation on accrual basis	Payroll tax consistent
<i>Early childhood, education and training</i>					
Children's services	Accrual	✓	x	✓	x
School education	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
VET	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Justice</i>					
Police services	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
Court administration	Accrual	✓	x	✓	✓
Corrective services	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Emergency management</i>					
Fire events	Accrual	✓	✓	x	✓
Road rescue events	..	x	x	x	x
Ambulance events	Accrual	✓	✓	x	✓
<i>Health</i>					
Public hospitals	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maternity services	Accrual	✓	x	✓	✓
Primary and community health <sup>b</sup>	Accrual	..	..	..	..
Mental health management	Accrual	x	x	✓	x
<i>Community services</i>					
Aged care services <sup>b</sup>	Accrual	..	..	..	✓
Services for people with disability	Accrual	✓	x	✓	✓
Child protection and out-of-home care <sup>b</sup>	Accrual	✓	x	✓	x
Juvenile justice services	..	x	x	x	x
<i>Housing and homelessness</i>					
Social housing	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
Homelessness services <sup>b</sup>	Accrual	..	..	..	..

✓ = Most jurisdictions include this item or report it separately, or include it on an accrual basis. x = Most jurisdictions do not include or report this item, or do not include it on an accrual basis. <sup>a</sup> Accrual: most jurisdictions reported in accrual terms for the data in the 2012 RoGS. Transition: most jurisdictions have not reported on either a pure cash or accrual basis. <sup>b</sup> Costs comprise mostly Australian Government transfer payments to private service providers or households. <sup>c</sup> Costs comprise mostly Australian Government transfers to individuals as part of their social security or family assistance payments. There is no separate appropriation for the Rent Assistance component of these payments and reported expenditure is based on a cash accounting regime. .. Not applicable.

Source: Chapters 3–17.

To improve the comparability of unit costs, the Steering Committee decided that both depreciation and the user cost of capital should be included in unit cost calculations (with the user cost of capital for land to be reported separately). The Steering Committee also agreed that the user cost of capital rate should be applied to all non-current physical assets, less any capital charges and interest on borrowings already reported by the agency (to avoid double counting). The rate

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applied for the user cost of capital is based on a weighted average of rates nominated by jurisdictions (currently 8 per cent).

Differences in asset measurement techniques can have a major impact on reported capital costs (SCRGSP 2001). However, the differences created by these asset measurement effects are generally relatively small in the context of total unit costs because capital costs represent a relatively small proportion of total cost (except for housing). In housing, where the potential for asset measurement techniques to influence total unit costs is greater, the adoption under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (replaced by the NAHA from 1 January 2009) of a uniform accounting framework has largely prevented this from occurring. The adoption of national uniform accounting standards across all service areas would be a desirable outcome for the Review.

### *Other costing issues*

Other costing issues include accounting for the GST, the apportionment of costs shared across services (mainly overhead departmental costs) and the treatment of non-government sourced revenue.

- Government agencies are treated in the same manner as other businesses for GST. That is, government agencies are not exempt from GST on their purchases, and can claim input tax credits for the GST paid on inputs. Data reported in this RoGS are net of GST paid and input tax credits received unless otherwise specified. The GST appears to have little quantifiable impact on the performance indicators in this RoGS.
- Full apportionment of departmental overheads is consistent with the concept of full cost recovery. The practice of apportioning overhead costs varies across the services in the RoGS.
- For non-government sourced revenue, some services deduct such revenue from their estimates of unit costs where it is relatively small (for example, in police services and court administration). The costs reported are therefore an estimate of net cost to government. However, where revenue from non-government sources is significant (such as with public hospitals, fire services and ambulance services), it is necessary to report both the gross cost and the net cost to government to obtain an adequate understanding of efficiency.

### **Reporting for special needs groups**

Some chapters of the RoGS focus on the performance of agencies in providing services to specific groups in society — for example, the chapters on aged care

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services, services to people with disability and children's services. Across the RoGS, the Review also seeks to report on the performance of agencies providing services for three identified special needs groups: Indigenous people; people living in communities outside the capital cities (that is, people living in other metropolitan areas, or rural and remote communities); and people from a non-English speaking background. There is a paucity of data on outcomes for these groups.

### *Indigenous Australians*

In May 1997, the (then) Prime Minister asked the Review to give particular attention to the performance of mainstream services in meeting the needs of Indigenous Australians. Table 2.4 provides an indication of which service areas report at least one data item on Indigenous Australians.

Since 2003, the Steering Committee has compiled all of the RoGS information on Indigenous Australians into a separate Indigenous compendium. The most recent compendium (of data from the 2011 RoGS) was released in April 2011 (SCRGSP 2011b). A compendium of Indigenous data from this RoGS will be released by mid-2012.

### *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators report*

In April 2002, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) commissioned the Steering Committee to produce a regular report on key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage. The terms of reference for this report was updated in March 2009 and the new terms of reference for the Review, endorsed by COAG in 2010, encompasses the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators* (OID) report. Five editions of the OID report have been published (SCRGSP 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011c). The sixth edition of the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* (OID) report is anticipated to be released in 2014.

### *Indigenous Expenditure Report*

In December 2007, COAG committed to expenditure reporting on services to Indigenous Australians. In October 2008, Treasury requested the Secretariat for the Review to provide secretariat services to the Indigenous Expenditure Report (IER) Steering Committee, an arrangement endorsed by COAG in 2009. In 2011, COAG transferred responsibility for developing and producing future editions of the IER to the Steering Committee for the Review. The former IER Steering Committee will continue as the IER Working Group providing expert advice to the Review's Steering Committee.

**Table 2.4 Reporting of at least one data item on Indigenous Australians, 2012 RoGS**

<i>Service area/indicator framework</i>	<i>Descriptive</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Outputs</i>		
			<i>Equity</i>	<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>Efficiency</i>
<i>Early childhood, education and training</i>					
Children's services	x	x	✓	x	x
School education	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
VET	x	✓	✓	✓	x
<i>Justice</i>					
Police services	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Court administration	x	x	x	x	x
Corrective services	✓	x	x	✓	x
<i>Emergency management</i>					
Fire events	x	x	x	x	x
Road rescue events	x	x	x	x	x
Ambulance events	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Health</i>					
Public hospitals	✓	x	x	✓	x
Maternity services	x	✓	x	x	x
Primary and community health	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Mental health management	✓	✓	✓	x	x
<i>Community services</i>					
Aged care services	✓	x	✓	✓	x
Services for people with disability	✓	x	✓	✓	x
Child protection and out-of-home care	✓	x	x	✓	x
Juvenile justice services	✓	x	x	✓	x
<i>Housing and homelessness</i>					
Social housing	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
Homelessness services	x	✓	✓	✓	x

Source: Chapters 3–17.

The first IER, released in 2011, notes that identifying the share of government expenditure that relates to Indigenous people is a complex exercise, and the quality of reporting is likely to improve across subsequent reports. An Australian government Supplement to the IER was published in September 2011. The next IER is anticipated to be released in mid-2012.

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### *Data collection issues relating to Indigenous Australians*

National work on improving Indigenous identification is ongoing. The robustness of Indigenous identification cuts across jurisdictions' collections, and a joint ABS and AIHW paper on national Indigenous identification is forthcoming.

Many administrative data collections do not have accurate or complete identification of the Indigenous status of their clients. In some instances, the method and level of identification of Indigenous people appear to vary across jurisdictions. Further, while many surveys now include an Indigenous identifier, many do not include a sufficiently large sample to provide reliable results for the Indigenous population.

The ABS and AIHW undertake important roles in improving data for the Indigenous population, including:

- an ongoing program to improve the identification of Indigenous status of clients in Australian, State and Territory governments' administrative systems. Priority is being given to the improvement of births and deaths statistics in all states and territories, as well as data for hospital separations, community services, education, housing and crime and justice
- work with other agencies to develop and support national Indigenous information plans, Indigenous performance indicators and Indigenous taskforces on a number of topics
- improving Indigenous enumeration in the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing, including data for small geographic areas
- an established cycle of Indigenous-specific surveys as part of the ABS Household Survey Program to provide Indigenous statistics on a three-yearly basis and an annual series of Indigenous labour force estimates
- producing publications related to improving methods for Indigenous statistics.

The (then) Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) commissioned work to identify methodological issues in Indigenous data collections, outline how these are being addressed and identify any remaining gaps. The findings are presented in *Population and Diversity: Policy Implications of Emerging Indigenous Demographic Trends*, released in mid-2006 by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) (Taylor 2006). In mid-2007, MCATSIA commissioned further work on Indigenous population statistics from the CAEPR constructed around four projects:

- detailed regional analysis of change in Indigenous social indicators

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- assessment of social and spatial mobility among Indigenous people in metropolitan areas
  - development of conceptual and methodological approaches to the measurement of short term mobility
  - case-study analyses of multiple disadvantage in select city neighbourhoods and regional centres.

Working Papers related to these projects are co-badged with MCATSIA and released as part of the CAEPR Working Paper Series (CAEPR 2011).

In December 2007, COAG established a Working Group on Indigenous Reform (WGIR) to support the achievement of COAG's Indigenous targets. It is chaired by the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Australian Government Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and comprises senior officials from each jurisdiction. The WGIR has developed a Closing the Gaps framework and the Steering Committee is committed to aligning relevant indicators in this RoGS with the WGIR framework.

The Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services (CGRIS) provides a six monthly report to the Minister for Families Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The first report was noted at COAG on 7 December 2009. COAG decided that the WGIR will provide a progress report to COAG on recommendations in the CGRS report. The first WGIR progress report was noted by COAG at its April 2010 meeting. COAG also committed to continuing its monitoring of progress of the National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery (COAG 2010). The fourth CGRIS report was released in October 2011 (CGRIS 2011).

The Review will draw on these initiatives in future RoGS.

### *People living in rural and remote areas*

The Steering Committee selectively reports on the performance of governments in delivering services to people in communities outside the capital cities. Table 2.5 indicates which service sectors are reporting at least one data item on services delivered to people in rural and remote areas.

**Table 2.5 Reporting of at least one data item on rural and remote communities, 2012 RoGS**

Service area/indicator framework	Descriptive	Outcomes	Outputs		
			Equity	Effectiveness	Efficiency
<i>Early childhood, education and training</i>					
Children's services	x	x	✓	✓	x
School education	✓	✓	x	x	x
VET	x	✓	✓	x	x
<i>Justice</i>					
Police services	x	x	x	x	x
Court administration	x	x	x	x	x
Corrective services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Emergency management</i>					
Fire events	x	x	x	✓	x
Ambulance events	x	x	x	x	x
Road rescue events	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Health</i>					
Public hospitals	✓	x	x	✓	x
Maternity services	x	x	x	x	x
Primary and community health	x	✓	✓	✓	x
Mental health management	x	✓	✓	x	x
<i>Community services</i>					
Aged care services	✓	x	✓	✓	x
Services for people with disability	x	x	✓	✓	x
Child protection and out-of-home care	x	x	x	x	x
Juvenile justice services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Housing</i>					
Social housing	✓	x	x	x	x
Homelessness services	x	x	x	x	x

Source: Chapters 3–17.

Where geographic location is used to identify groups with special needs, data are usually disaggregated according to a geographic classification system, either:

- the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) classification system developed in 1994 by the Department of Primary Industries and Energy, and the then Department of Human Services and Health (now Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing), or a variant of RRMA, or
- the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS 2009) Australian Standard Geographical Classification of remoteness areas based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) developed by

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Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and the National Key Centre For Social Applications of Geographic Information Systems.

- The first three volumes of the ABS' ASGS were released in 2010 and 2011 for Main Structure and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (ABS 2011a), Indigenous Structure (ABS 2011b), and Non ABS Structures (ABS 2011c).
- Future volumes will detail the: Urban Centres and Localities/Section of State and Remoteness Areas.

Reporting data on rural and remote communities is complicated by the number of classification systems that exist. The chapters on children's services, VET, emergency management, aged care services, disability services and housing use the ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classification of remoteness areas.

A number of other services (public hospitals, primary and community health and protection and support services) use the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) classification or a variant (DPIE and DSHS 1994). The chapter on school education uses its own system developed for education ministers, known as the Geographic Location Classification, which draws on the RRMA classification and ABS's Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (Jones 2000).

### *People from a non-English speaking background*

A number of chapters in the RoGS include data on the performance of governments in providing services to people from a non-English speaking background. Table 2.6 indicates which services have reported at least one performance indicator for all jurisdictions.

Reporting data on people from a non-English speaking background is complicated by the number of classification systems that exist. Various chapters of the RoGS use different classification systems based on: people speaking a language other than English at home (reported for children's services, VET, and breast cancer detection); people with a language background other than English (reported for school education); and people born in a non-English speaking country (reported for aged care services, services for people with disability and homelessness services).

**Table 2.6 Reporting of at least one data item on people from a non-English speaking background, 2012 RoGS**

Service area/indicator framework	Descriptive	Outcomes	Outputs		
			Equity	Effectiveness	Efficiency
<i>Early childhood, education and training</i>					
Children's services	x	x	✓	x	x
School education	✓	✓	x	x	x
VET	x	✓	✓	x	x
<i>Justice</i>					
Police services	x	x	x	x	x
Court administration	x	x	x	x	x
Corrective services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Emergency management</i>					
Fire events	x	x	x	x	x
Road rescue events	x	x	x	x	x
Ambulance events	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Health</i>					
Public hospitals	x	x	x	x	x
Maternity services	x	x	x	x	x
Primary and community health	x	x	x	x	x
Mental health management	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Community services</i>					
Aged care services	x	x	✓	x	x
Services for people with disability	x	x	✓	✓	x
Child protection and out-of-home care	x	x	x	x	x
Juvenile justice services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Housing</i>					
Social housing	x	x	x	x	x
Homelessness services	x	x	✓	✓	x

Source: Chapters 3–17.

## 2.3 'Cross-cutting' issues

There is growing emphasis on the management of policy issues that cover more than one service-sector, service area or ministerial portfolio — for example, government policies aimed at specific client groups such as older people, females, children, Indigenous Australians, people in rural and remote areas and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Improving the management of these issues can contribute to more effective and efficient service provision. Greater efficiency can come from more clearly defined priorities and from the elimination of duplicated or

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inconsistent programs. Improved outcomes can also result from a more holistic and client centred approach to service delivery.

Cross-cutting issues arise in several areas of the RoGS. The frameworks in the sector summaries are one means of reporting outcomes for a range of different services working in combination. The frameworks and the scope of services reported are evolving over time. Mental health management, for example, currently focuses on the performance of specialised mental health services, but people with a mental illness also access: primary and community health services (such as general practitioners, and drug and alcohol services) (chapter 11), whereby, general practitioners often refer people to specialist health and health-related services, and the quality of their links with these services and of their referral practices can influence the appropriateness of services received by clients; aged care services (chapter 13); services for people with disability (chapter 14); housing (chapter 16); and, some people with a mental illness also enter corrective services (chapter 8).

Other references in this RoGS to cross-cutting issues include:

- workforce participation and the availability of child care services, and VET in schools and non-linear education and training pathways (Early childhood, education and training sector summary)
- mortality rates and life expectancy are influenced by education, public health, housing, primary and community health, and hospital services (as well as external factors) (Health sector summary)
- potentially preventable hospitalisations are influenced by primary and community health services (chapter 11)
- long term aged care in public hospitals (chapter 13)
- younger people with disability in residential aged care facilities (chapter 14)
- community services pathways and Home and Community Care (HACC) across the community services sector (Community services sector summary)
- rates of return to prison and community corrections are influenced by the activities of police, courts and corrective services (as well as other factors) (Justice sector summary)
- changes in education outcomes over time for children on custody or guardianship orders, compared to changes in education outcomes over time for all children (chapter 15)
- the contributions of many services to child protection services. Police services investigate serious allegations of child abuse and neglect, courts decide whether a child will be placed on an order, education and child care services provide services for these children, and health services support the assessment of child

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protection matters and deliver therapeutic, counselling and other services (discussed primarily in chapter 15)

- close links between Homelessness services and other forms of housing assistance reported in Housing , particularly crisis accommodation (Housing and homelessness sector summary).

### *Counter-terrorism*

A number of service areas included in this RoGS contribute to government initiatives to improve security throughout Australia. In particular, emergency services, police and public hospitals are key services involved in the inter-jurisdictional National Counter Terrorism Plan.<sup>1</sup> While performance data in this RoGS do not explicitly include the details of these government activities, such activities need to be kept in mind when interpreting performance results — for example:

- counter-terrorism activities might have led to an increase in government expenditure, but the outputs or outcomes (for example, increased security patrols, emergency planning or improved security) may not show up in the data in the chapters. In this case, performance results for efficiency indicators might suggest a decrease in value for money
- counter-terrorism requirements might have been accommodated by an increase in productivity rather than an increase in expenditure, but if the additional outputs or outcomes are not recorded in the chapters, then performance results will not reflect the improvement in productivity.

The agencies with the primary responsibilities for counter-terrorism (such as the defence forces, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the relevant coordinating bodies) are not within scope for this RoGS, so comprehensive reporting of counter-terrorism is not included.

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<sup>1</sup> A National Counter Terrorism Committee with officials from the Australian, State and Territory governments has developed a National Counter Terrorism Plan. All governments have responsibilities under the Plan to prevent acts of terrorism or, if such acts occur, to manage their consequences in Australia (Attorney-General's Department 2009). The Counter-Terrorism White Paper 2010, *Securing Australia – Protecting our Community*, sets out Australia's counter-terrorism objectives and the means by which the Government will pursue them and provides that in relation to global counter-terrorism, Australia is committed to all United Nations counter-terrorism agreements. The White Paper reflects a number of improvements to Australia's approach to counter-terrorism and brings together for the first time, in a comprehensive manner, Australia's response to terrorism both domestically and internationally (DPM&C 2010).

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