
Chapter 14: Children's services (CH)

The children's services chapter

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 is provided to children aged 12 years and younger, by someone other than the child's parents or guardian. Preschool services are provided to children mainly in the year or two before those children 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 presented in this chapter relate to services that are provided for children aged 12 years and younger and that are supported by the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. Local governments also plan, fund and deliver children's services; given data limitations, however, this chapter records data on local government activities only where Commonwealth, State and Territory funding and licensing are involved. The chapter does not include services that do not receive government funding (unless otherwise noted).

Indigenous data in the children's services chapter

The children's services chapter in the *Report on Government Services 2003* (ROGS) contains the following data items on Indigenous people:

- Proportion of children from special needs groups attending Commonwealth approved child care services, May 2002;
- Proportion of preschool attendees from Indigenous backgrounds (relative to representation in the community), 2001-02; and
- Proportion of preschool attendees from Indigenous backgrounds for each year between 1997-98 to 2001-02.

The *Report on Government Services 2003* also notes that the Commonwealth provides supplementary funding for the preschool education of children from Indigenous backgrounds (ROGS 2003, p.14.8).

Supporting tables

Supporting tables for data within the children services chapter of the compendium are contained in the attachment to the compendium. Supporting tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by the abbreviated chapter name (for example, CH.A5 is table 5 in the children services attachment to the compendium).

As the data are directly sourced from the *Report on Government Services 2003*, the compendium also notes where the original table, figure or text in the Report can be found. For example, where the compendium refers to 'ROGS 2003, p. 6.15' this is page 15 of chapter 6 of the Report and 'ROGS 2003, 6A.2' is attachment table 2 of attachment 6 of the Report.

Access of target groups — representation in services

Data on the representation of children from some special needs groups in Commonwealth approved child care services are available for 1997, 1999 and 2002 from the Commonwealth Census of Child Care Services (CCCCS), and for August 2000 from Centrelink administrative data. These two data sources are not directly comparable because there are differences in their collection methods.¹ The variations are particularly distorting for data on children from Indigenous backgrounds, and for NT data.

The available data indicate that the proportion of children in special needs groups in Commonwealth supported child care is sometimes substantially different across jurisdictions. This variation largely reflects jurisdictional differences in the representation of children from the special needs groups in the community (table CH.1).

The proportion of child care attendees from an Indigenous background in May 2002 ranged from 9.9 per cent in the NT (where the representation of Indigenous children in the population was 41.6 per cent) to 0.5 per cent in Victoria (where the representation in the population was 1.1 per cent). Nationally, the representation of children from Indigenous background among children accessing child care services was lower than this group's overall representation in the community (table CH.1).

¹ The CCCC data are collected from Commonwealth approved child care services based on enumeration from services. The CCCC includes all children attending Commonwealth Government supported services, and there will be double counting where a child attends more than one service. Centrelink administrative data are collected from customers when they claim Child Care Benefit. As such, the data collection is restricted to customers who are eligible for Child Care Benefit. There is no double counting where children attend more than one service because Centrelink assigns each child a unique reference number.

Table CH.1 Proportion of children from special needs groups attending Commonwealth approved child care services, 2002 (per cent)

Representation	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA ^a	SA	Tas	ACT ^b	NT ^b	Australia	
									2001	2002
<i>Children from non-English speaking backgrounds</i>										
In child care services	16.6	12.3	6.0	7.4	6.3	2.4	11.1	8.1	na	10.9
In the community ^c	20.4	19.9	7.1	11.0	11.2	2.6	13.1	29.4	15.6	na
<i>Children from Indigenous backgrounds</i>										
In child care services	1.5	0.5	2.5	1.7	1.3	1.2	0.7	9.9	na	1.6
In the community ^c	4.1	1.1	6.6	6.5	3.4	7.1	2.3	41.6	4.6	na
<i>Children from a single parent family</i>										
In child care services ^d	16.8	17.6	20.6	20.6	21.1	18.5	14.6	17.0	na	18.6
In the community ^c	17.5	16.3	19.9	18.1	19.5	20.9	16.5	20.5	18.0	na
<i>Children with a disability</i>										
In child care services	2.4	2.3	2.1	1.6	3.4	2.3	2.1	2.3	na	2.3
In the community ^e	6.6	6.6	8.3	10.3	9.6	7.1	na	na	7.6	na
<i>Children from rural and remote areas</i>										
In child care services	22.6	22.9	23.1	22.5	19.5	47.2	–	51.7	na	22.9
In the community ^f	29.0	28.0	36.9	30.6	30.2	39.9	0.2	59.8	30.7	na

^a WA data do not include those children who attend kindergartens for four year olds provided by the Department of Education. ^b Data on children with a disability in the community were not available for publication. ^c Data relate to children aged 0–14 years and were obtained from the ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing. ^d No information on the number of children from single parent families was available for mobile and toy libraries, occasional care neighbourhood models, occasional care, Aboriginal playgroups and vacation care. ^e Data relate to children aged 0–14 years at June 1998 and were obtained from the ABS 1998 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. ^f Data relate to children aged 0–14 years at June 1996, and were obtained from the ABS 1996 Census of Population and Housing. **na** Not available. – Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: ABS 1997 and 2002, *Census of Population and Housing* (unpublished); ABS (*Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables, Australia, 1998*, Cat. no. 4430.1.40.001; *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables, New South Wales, 1998*, Cat. no. 4430.2.40.001; *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables, Victoria, 1998*, Cat. no. 4430.3.40.001; *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables, Queensland, 1998*, Cat. no. 4430.4.40.001; *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables, South Australia, 1998*, Cat. no. 4430.5.40.001; *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables, Western Australia, 1998*, Cat. no. 4430.6.40.001; *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables, Tasmania, 1998*, Cat. no. 4430.7.40.001; *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables, Australian Capital Territory, 1998*, Cat. no. 4430.8.40.001; *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables, Northern Territory, 1998*, Cat. no. 4430.9.40.001) CCCCS, May 2002 (unpublished); ROGS 2003, p. 14.22; table CH.A1.

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 three years or under (children aged four years or under in WA). The age from which children may attend preschools varies across jurisdictions. Children in Victoria, Tasmania, the ACT and 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. 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 but who now reside in Tasmania).

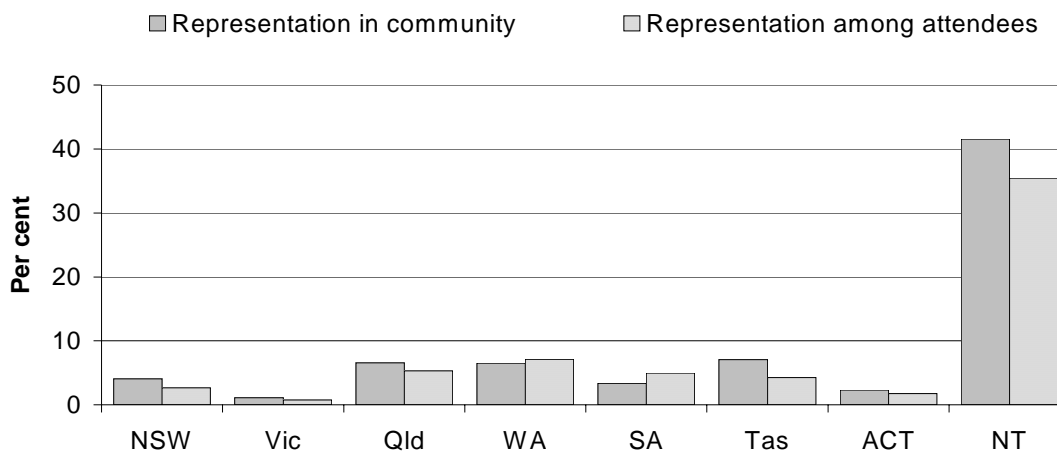
Younger Indigenous children living in remote areas also may attend preschools in the NT and Queensland. In SA, a pre-entry program provides one session of preschool a week for ten weeks in the term before preschool, and children from Indigenous backgrounds may attend preschool at three years of age. 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 a week) at three years of age.

This disparity in the age from which children may access preschool services has reduced 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); and
- younger children attending preschool services.

All jurisdictions could provide data on Indigenous children attending preschools in 2001-02. Across jurisdictions, the proportion of Indigenous children attending preschools in 2001-02 was broadly similar to their representation in the community. The proportion ranged from 35.4 per cent in the NT (where the representation of Indigenous children in the community was 41.6 per cent) to 0.8 per cent in Victoria (where their representation in the community was 1.1 per cent) (figure CH.1).

Figure CH.1 Proportion of preschool attendees from Indigenous backgrounds, 2001-02^{a, b}



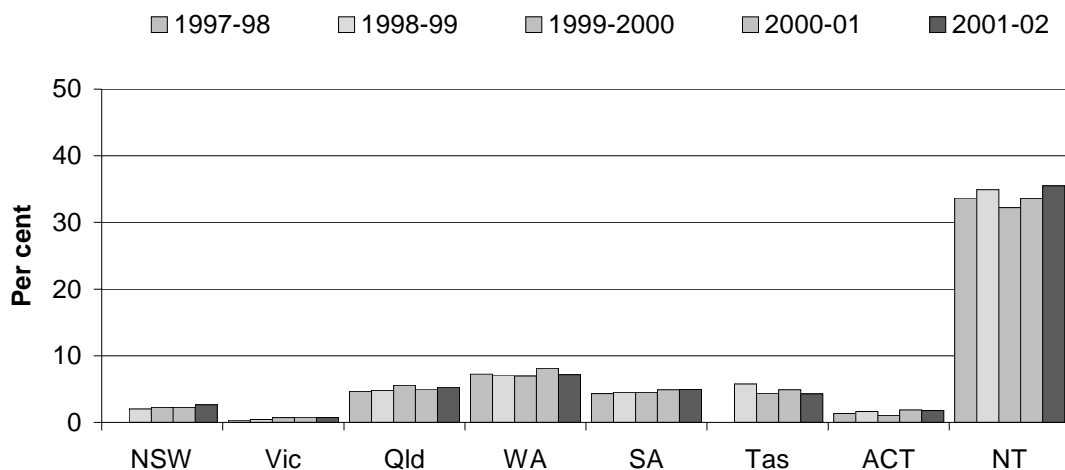
<i>Representation</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>
In community	%	4.1	1.1	6.6	6.5	3.4	7.1	2.3	41.6
Among attendees	%	2.7	0.8	5.3	7.2	5.0	4.3	1.8	35.4

^a Comparisons between the representation of Indigenous children among preschool attendees and their representation in the community need to be treated with caution because there are definitional differences and differences in the base population. ^b Excludes younger children attending preschool and all children attending non-government preschools.

Source: ABS 2002, *Census of Population and Housing* (unpublished); State and Territory governments (unpublished); ROGS 2003, p. 14.24; tables CH.A2–CH.A9.

The proportion of preschool attendees from Indigenous backgrounds varied across jurisdictions, but has been relatively constant over time within jurisdictions (figure CH.2).

Figure CH.2 Proportion of preschool attendees from Indigenous backgrounds^a



Year	Unit	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
1997-98	%	na	0.4	4.7	7.3	4.3	na	1.4	33.7
1998-99	%	2.0	0.5	4.8	7.1	4.5	5.8	1.7	34.9
1999-2000	%	2.3	0.8	5.6	6.9	4.5	4.4	1.1	32.2
2000-01	%	2.3	0.8	5.1	8.1	5.0	4.9	1.9	33.6
2001-02	%	2.7	0.8	5.3	7.2	5.0	4.3	1.8	35.4

^a Excludes younger children attending preschool and children attending non-government preschools. **na** Not available.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); ROGS 2003, p. 14.25; tables CH.A2-CH.A9.