
14 Children's services

This chapter presents performance and descriptive information for government funded and/or delivered child care and preschool services. Children's services aim to meet the care, education and development needs of children, although the emphasis on these broad objectives may differ across the services. Child care services reported in this chapter include those provided to children aged less than 13 years, usually by someone other than the child's parents or guardian.

Preschool services reported in this chapter are provided to children mainly in the year or two before they commence full time schooling. Younger Indigenous children living in remote areas in the NT and Queensland also may attend preschools¹. In SA, a pre-entry program provides one session of preschool a week for 10 weeks in the term before preschool, and children from Indigenous backgrounds may attend preschool at 3 years of age. In the ACT, children from Indigenous backgrounds, children with English as a second language, and children with a hearing impairment and/or whose parents have a hearing impairment may be eligible for early entry into preschool (for 5.25 hours per week) at 3 years of age.

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

Indigenous data in the children's services chapter

The children's services chapter in the *Report on Government Services 2006* (2006 Report) contains the following data items on Indigenous people:

- representation of Indigenous children in Commonwealth approved child care services (relative to the representation of Indigenous children in the community), 2004

¹ In the NT, younger children may attend with approval under certain circumstances, and younger Indigenous children may attend from 3 years of age if accompanied by an adult.

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- proportion of preschool attendees who are from Indigenous backgrounds for each year between 2000-01 to 2004-05
 - representation of Indigenous attendees in State and Territory funded or provided preschools (relative to the representation of Indigenous children in the community), 2004-05.

The 2006 Report also notes that the Australian Government provides supplementary funding to support the participation of Indigenous children in preschool programs. (2006 Report, p. 14.8). In 2003, an estimated \$11.2 million was provided to education providers for 7644 full time equivalent Indigenous preschool enrolments (DEST 2005).

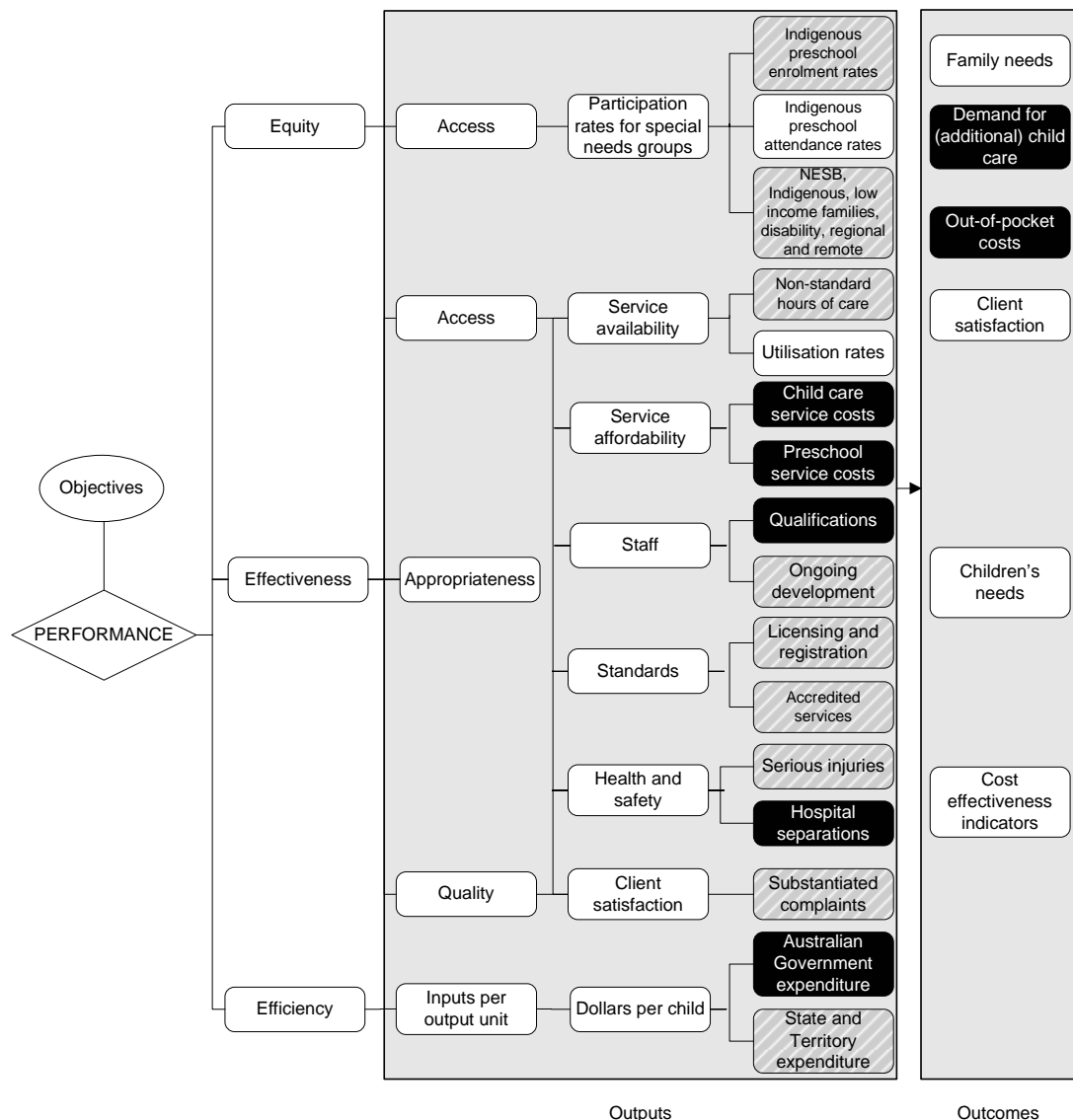
Supporting tables

Supporting tables for data within the children's services chapter of this compendium are contained in attachment 14A of the compendium. These tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 14A.3 is table 3 in the children's services attachment). As the data are directly sourced from the 2006 Report, the compendium also notes where the original table, figure or text in the 2006 Report can be found. For example, where the compendium refers to '2006 Report, p. 14.15' this is page 15 of chapter 14 of the 2006 Report, and '2006 Report, table 14A.2' is attachment table 2 of attachment 14 of the 2006 Report.

Framework of performance indicators

Data for Indigenous people are reported for a subset of the performance indicators for children's services in the 2006 Report. It is important to interpret these data in the context of the broader performance indicator framework outlined in figure 14.1. The performance indicator framework shows which data are comparable in the 2006 Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, the text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary.

Figure 14.1 Performance indicators for children's services



Key to indicators

- Text** Provided on a comparable basis for this Report subject to caveats in each chart or table
- Text** Information not complete or not directly comparable
- Text** Yet to be developed or not collected for this Report

Source: 2006 Report, p. 14.15, figure 14.4.

Participation rates for special needs groups

The 'participation rates for special needs groups' indicator is explained in box 14.1.

Box 14.1 Participation rates for special needs groups

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

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

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

The data indicate that the representation of children in special needs groups among users of Australian Government supported child care is sometimes substantially different across jurisdictions (table 14.1). It is important to note that due to the unavailability of certain data items, the Australian Government data exclude flexible and innovative services and other services such as mobile and toy libraries, Indigenous play groups and enrichment programs, which are targeted towards children from these groups. However, there is a general pattern across jurisdictions for children from Indigenous backgrounds. In almost all jurisdictions, the representation of children from an Indigenous background among child care users was lower than this group's overall representation in the community.

Table 14.1 Proportion of children (aged 0–12 years) from special needs groups attending Australian Government approved child care services, 2004 (per cent)

<i>Representation</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Children from non-English speaking backgrounds									
In child care services	17.4	13.5	6.3	7.9	6.9	3.4	12.1	8.1	11.6
In the community ^{a, b}	8.8	8.0	2.7	3.6	3.0	1.1	2.1	4.1	6.1
Children from Indigenous backgrounds									
In child care services	1.6	0.6	2.5	1.8	1.3	1.0	0.7	10.7	1.6
In the community ^{c, d}	3.6	1.0	5.9	5.8	3.1	6.4	2.1	36.7	4.1
Children from low-income families									
In child care services	28.0	28.3	33.8	32.6	33.0	31.5	12.4	18.8	29.9
In the community ^e	16.7	16.1	15.0	17.3	18.6	19.9	8.0	18.8	16.4
Children with a disability									
In child care services	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.7	3.5	2.2	2.1	2.4	2.1
In the community ^f	8.6	7.2	7.9	9.2	9.9	7.3	7.2	na	8.2
Children from regional and remote areas									
Children from regional areas									
In child care services	25.9	22.5	38.9	18.2	16.2	99.6	–	74.0	28.8
In the community ^{c, d}	30.0	29.1	45.6	24.0	26.9	97.6	0.3	48.9	33.4
Children from remote areas									
In child care services	0.4	0.1	1.6	5.0	2.0	0.4	–	26.0	1.4
In the community ^{c, d}	0.8	0.1	4.7	9.2	4.8	2.4	–	51.1	3.2

^a Data relate to children aged 0–11 years and were obtained from the ABS 2002 Survey of Child Care. These data are not strictly comparable to the proportion of children from a non-English speaking background using the services. ^b Data for Tasmania have a relative standard error of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent and should be used with caution. ^c Data relate to children aged 0–14 years at June 2001 and were obtained from the ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing. ^d These numbers do not include innovative or flexible services that receive direct funding from the Australian Government and are targeted towards children from these groups. ^e Data relate to children aged 0–12 years and were obtained from the ABS 2003-04 Survey of Household Income and Expenditure. ^f Data are estimated from the ABS 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers and relate to children aged 0–14 years, and are thus not strictly comparable to the proportion of child care service users with a disability. **na** Not available. – Nil or rounded to zero.

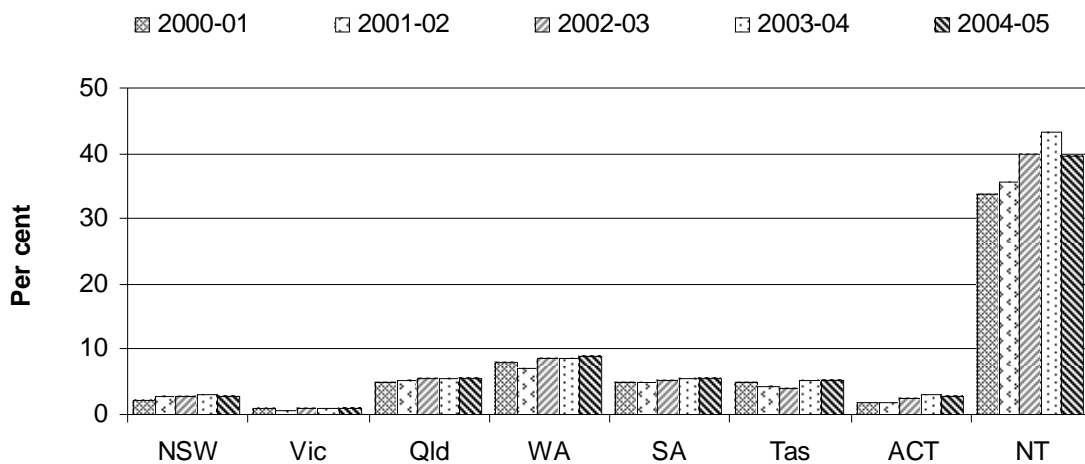
Source: AGCCCS (unpublished); ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing (unpublished); ABS 2003-04 Survey of Household Income and Expenditure (unpublished); ABS 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (unpublished); ABS 2002 Child Care Survey (unpublished); table 14A.1; 2006 Report, p. 14.17, table 14.3.

Estimates for the representation of special needs groups in the community are based on data that may not match the age range used for the participation of special needs groups in preschools. Although the participation of special needs groups in preschools and the representation of special needs groups in the community are not directly comparable, they provide a broad indication of the relative access to preschool for special needs groups.

Data on the representation of special needs groups among government funded preschool attendees are provided in table 14.2. The proportion of preschool attendees in 2004-05 who were from special needs groups display no clear pattern, with some groups overrepresented in several jurisdictions and underrepresented in others.

The proportion of preschool enrolments from Indigenous backgrounds has been relatively constant over time within jurisdictions, except in the NT, where it increased between 2000-01 and 2004-05 (figure 14.2). The proportion of Indigenous enrolments largely reflects the proportion of the population in each jurisdiction from Indigenous backgrounds.

Figure 14.2 Proportion of preschool enrolments from Indigenous backgrounds



Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); tables 14A.2, 14A.3, 14A.4, 14A.5, 14A.6, 14A.7, 14A.8 and 14A.9; 2006 Report, p. 14.18, figure 14.5.

Table 14.2 Proportion of children (aged 0–12 years) from special needs groups attending State and Territory funded or provided preschools, 2004-05 (per cent)

<i>Representation</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Children from non-English speaking backgrounds									
In preschool services	7.4	13.6	1.0	na	9.5	na	7.7	na	6.4
In the community ^{a, b}	8.8	8.0	2.7	3.6	3.0	1.1	2.1	4.1	6.1
Children from Indigenous backgrounds									
In preschool services	2.9	0.8	5.6	8.9	5.5	5.2	2.7	39.6	4.5
In the community ^{c, d}	3.6	1.0	5.9	5.8	3.1	6.4	2.1	36.7	4.1
Children with a disability									
In preschool services ^e	6.4	8.8	1.3	3.1	16.0	na	5.2	na	5.9
In the community ^f	8.6	7.2	7.9	9.2	9.9	7.3	7.2	na	8.2
Children from regional and remote areas									
Children from regional areas									
In preschool services	68.6	31.8	50.2	24.2	28.4	98.1	na	na	45.6
In the community ^{c, d}	30.0	29.1	45.6	24.0	26.9	97.6	0.3	48.9	33.4
Children from remote areas									
In preschool services	1.4	0.1	8.5	3.8	5.9	1.9	na	na	3.5
In the community ^{c, d}	0.8	0.1	4.7	9.2	4.8	2.4	..	51.1	3.2

^a Data relate to children aged 0–11 years and were obtained from the ABS 2002 Survey of Child Care. These data are not strictly comparable to the proportion of children from a non-English speaking background using the services. ^b Data for Tasmania has a relative standard error of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent and should be used with caution. ^c Data relate to children aged 0–14 years at June 2001 and were obtained from the ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing. ^d These numbers do not include innovative or flexible services that receive direct funding from the Australian Government and are targeted towards children from these groups. ^e Data are not directly comparable between jurisdictions because there is no national definition or standard on children with a disability. ^f Data are estimated from the ABS 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers and relate to children aged 0–14 years, and are thus not strictly comparable to the proportion of preschool users with a disability. **na** Not available. **..** Not applicable.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing (unpublished); ABS 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (unpublished); ABS 2002 Child Care Survey (unpublished); tables 14A.2, 14A.3, 14A.4, 14A.5, 14A.6, 14A.7, 14A.8 and 14A.9; 2006 Report, p. 14.19, table 14.4.

Future directions in performance reporting

The Review will continue to improve the appropriateness and completeness of the performance indicator framework. Future work on indicators will focus on developing an access indicator for Indigenous preschool attendance.

Supporting tables

Supporting tables for data within this chapter are contained in the attachment to the compendium. These tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 14A.3 is table 3 in the children's services attachment). The tables included in the attachment are listed below.

- Table 14A.1** Equity indicator: Representation of special needs groups in attendees at Australian Government approved child care services (per cent)
- Table 14A.2** Access and equity indicators: Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, New South Wales
- Table 14A.3** Access and equity indicators: Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Victoria
- Table 14A.4** Access and equity indicators: Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Queensland
- Table 14A.5** Access and equity indicators: Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Western Australia
- Table 14A.6** Access and equity indicators: Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, South Australia
- Table 14A.7** Access and equity indicators: Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Tasmania
- Table 14A.8** Access and equity indicators: Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Australian Capital Territory
- Table 14A.9** Access and equity indicators: Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Northern Territory

References

DEST (Department of Education, Science and Training) 2005, *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training*, 2003, May.