
3 Children's services

Children's services aim to meet the care, education and development needs of children. In this chapter, child care services are those that are provided to children aged less than 13 years (that is, 0–12 years), usually by someone other than the child's parents or guardian. Preschool services are services provided to children mainly in the year or two before they begin full time schooling. To acknowledge the important links between children's services and education, this chapter has been moved into the new 'Early childhood, education and training' section of the *Report on Government Services 2008* (2008 Report).

The data in this chapter relate to services that are supported by the Australian, State and Territory governments. Local governments also plan, fund and deliver children's services. Due to data limitations, the only local government data included are where Australian, State and Territory government funding and licensing are involved.

Indigenous data in the Children's services chapter

The Children's services chapter in the 2008 Report contains the following data items on Indigenous people:

- representation of Indigenous children in Australian Government approved child care services (compared to their representation in the community), 2006
- representation of Indigenous children enrolled in State and Territory funded or provided preschools (compared to their representation in the community), 2006-07.

The 2008 Report also states that the Australian Government provides supplementary funding to support the participation of Indigenous children in preschool programs. In 2007, an estimated \$13.5 million was provided on a per capita and project basis to 1254 preschools. The funding covers 8908 full time equivalent Indigenous preschool enrolments (DEST unpublished).

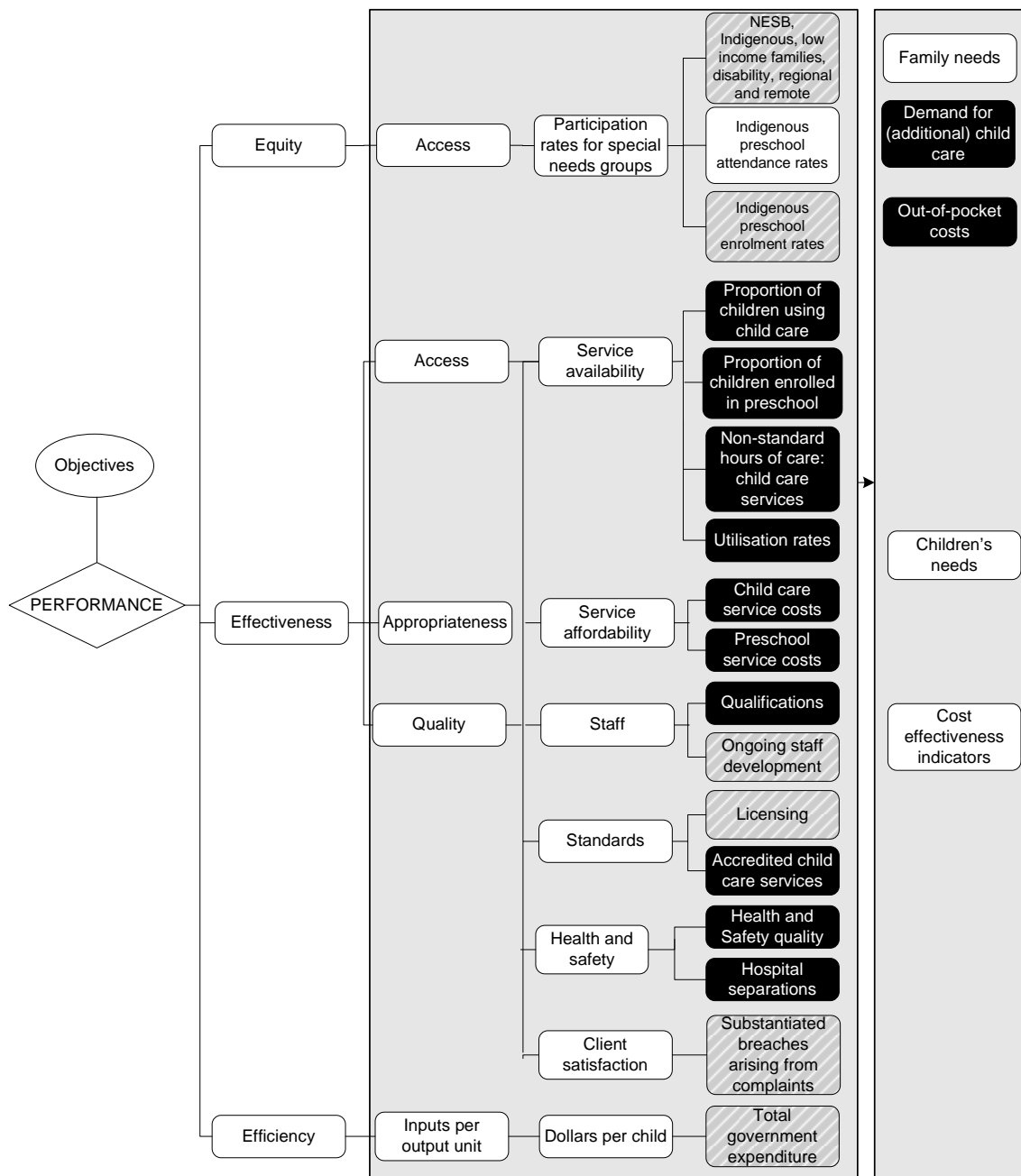
Attachment tables

Attachment tables for data within the children's services chapter of this compendium are contained in attachment 3A of the compendium. These tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 3A.3 is table 3 in the children's services attachment). As the data are directly sourced from the 2008 Report, the compendium also notes where the original table, figure or text in the 2008 Report can be found. For example, where the compendium refers to '2008 Report, p. 3.15' this is page 15 of chapter 3 of the 2008 Report, and '2008 Report, table 3A.2' is attachment table 2 of attachment 3A of the 2008 Report.

Framework of performance indicators

Data for Indigenous people are reported for a subset of the performance indicators for children's services in the 2008 Report. It is important to interpret these data in the context of the broader performance indicator framework outlined in figure 3.1. The performance indicator framework shows which data are comparable in the 2008 Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, the text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary.

Figure 3.1 Performance indicators for children's services



Key to indicators

- Text Data for these indicators comparable, subject to caveats to each chart or table
- Text Data for these indicators are not complete, or not directly comparable
- Text These indicators yet to be developed or data not collected for this Report

Source: 2008 Report, figure 3.2, p. 3.11.

Participation rates for special needs groups

‘Participation rates for special needs groups’ is an indicator of equitable access to services (box 3.1).

Box 3.1 Participation rates for special needs groups

‘Participation rates for special needs groups’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that:

- all Australian families have equitable access to child care and preschool services
- there is no discrimination between groups
- there is consideration of the needs of those groups which 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 (for 0–5 and 6–12 year olds) and preschool services (3–5 year olds). 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. ‘Indigenous preschool enrolment rates’ are used as a proxy for ‘Indigenous preschool attendance rates’ (see figure 3.2).

The representation of special needs groups among children’s services users being broadly similar to their representation in the community, may indicate equity of access.

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 3.1). It is important to note that due to the unavailability of certain data items, the Australian Government data exclude flexible and innovative services, which are targeted towards children from these groups.

Table 3.1 shows data for children aged 0–5 years and 6–12 years for 2006. At a national level, Indigenous children from both age groups participated in child care at a lower rate than their representation in the community. In the 0–5 age group, 1.8 per cent of children were represented in child care, compared to 4.4 per cent represented in the community. In the 6–12 age group, these representations were 1.6 per cent compared to 4.3 per cent, respectively.

Table 3.1 Proportion of children (aged 0–5, 6–12 years) from special needs groups attending Australian Government approved child care services, 2006 (per cent)^{a, b}

<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									
Aged 0–5 in child care services	17.9	14.3	5.8	7.5	9.2	2.9	11.8	9.6	12.1
Aged 0–5 in the community	24.6	23.2	12.8	16.8	14.8	8.1	17.8	37.0	20.1
Aged 6–12 in child care services	14.6	10.5	3.9	3.9	6.7	1.7	6.5	6.8	8.5
Aged 6–12 in the community	22.1	20.5	11.2	14.5	12.8	6.5	14.9	36.5	17.7
Indigenous children									
Aged 0–5 in child care services	1.7	0.7	2.2	2.3	2.3	1.4	0.8	10.6	1.8
Aged 0–5 in the community	4.1	1.2	6.4	5.6	3.4	6.6	2.2	38.9	4.4
Aged 6–12 in child care services	1.2	0.6	2.2	1.8	1.9	1.5	0.6	11.9	1.6
Aged 6–12 in the community	4.1	1.2	6.1	5.5	3.3	6.4	2.3	39.4	4.3
Children from low-income families									
Aged 0–5 in child care services	26.3	26.6	29.3	26.8	27.8	29.8	11.2	17.6	26.9
Aged 0–5 in the community	23.9	27.2	29.0	27.7	25.8	32.7	7.7	np	26.1
Aged 6–12 in child care services	22.3	26.4	27.3	29.5	30.9	27.5	9.1	17.3	25.9
Aged 6–12 in the community	29.9	26.8	28.8	23.5	34.1	35.3	10.7	np	28.2
Children with a disability									
Aged 0–5 in child care services	3.2	2.0	1.8	2.0	3.2	2.3	1.7	3.2	2.5
Aged 0–5 in the community	4.7	4.6	5.1	6.0	7.0	4.4	9.1	np	5.2
Aged 6–12 in child care services	3.0	3.1	2.9	3.6	4.3	2.4	2.1	4.6	3.2
Aged 6–12 in the community	10.7	8.5	9.5	11.4	10.2	7.7	6.2	np	9.8
Children from regional areas									
Aged 0–5 in child care services	27.5	28.1	38.0	20.5	20.8	99.1	0.2	73.9	30.9
Aged 0–5 in the community	27.1	26.5	44.6	23.9	25.8	98.0	0.1	50.9	31.6
Aged 6–12 in child care services	20.5	19.9	34.0	15.0	14.8	100.0	–	82.5	25.1
Aged 6–12 in the community	30.3	29.7	47.1	25.5	27.4	97.8	0.3	51.9	34.3
Children from remote areas									
Aged 0–5 in child care services	0.4	na	1.4	4.2	2.6	0.9	..	26.1	1.3
Aged 0–5 in the community	0.7	0.1	4.6	8.9	4.3	2.0	..	50.6	3.1
Aged 6–12 in child care services	0.1	na	1.1	2.5	1.4	–	..	17.4	0.9
Aged 6–12 in the community	0.7	0.1	4.3	8.4	4.4	2.1	..	50.7	3.0

^a See source table for complete footnotes and definitions. ^b These numbers do not include innovative or flexible services that receive direct funding from the Australian Government and are targeted towards children from these special needs groups. .. Not applicable – Nil or rounded to zero. **np** Not published.

Source: AGCCCS (unpublished); ABS 2006 *Census of Population and Housing* (unpublished); ABS *Survey of Income and Housing 2005-06* (unpublished); ABS *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2003* (unpublished); table 3A.2; 2008 Report, table 3.2, p. 3.14.

Data on the representation of special needs groups for children aged 3–5 years in government funded preschools are provided in table 3.2. The data provide a broad indication of the relative access to preschool for special needs groups. Data on representation of special needs groups in State and Territory child care and preschools, for children aged 0–12 years, can be found in tables 3A.3–3A.10.

Nationally, the patterns for Indigenous children's representation in preschools varied across jurisdictions, though at the national level, they participated at a similar proportion (4.9 per cent) to their representation in the community (4.5 per cent).

Table 3.2 Proportion of children (aged 3–5 years) from special needs groups attending State and Territory funded or provided preschools, 2006-07^a

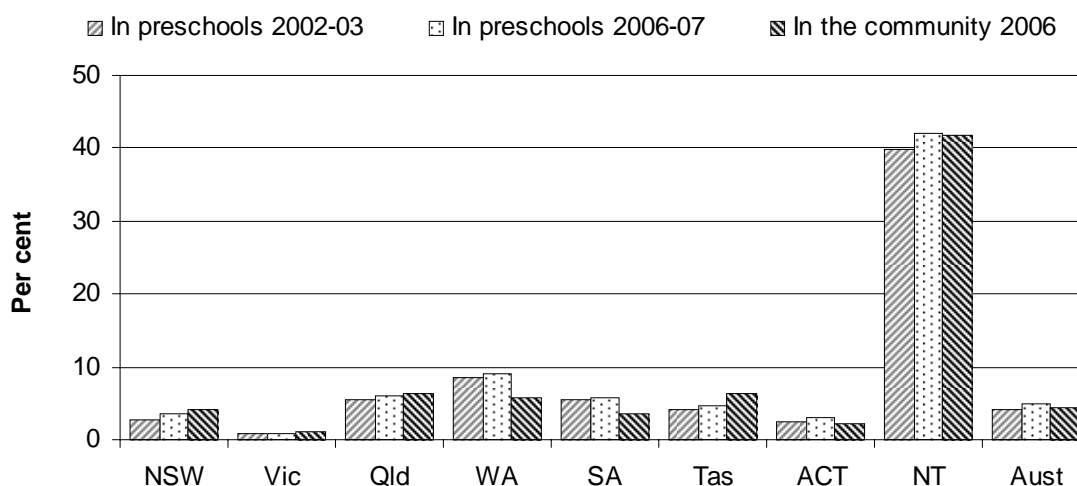
<i>Representation</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Children from non-English speaking backgrounds									
In preschool services	9.8	16.4	1.6	na	10.3	na	14.7	na	8.0
In the community ^b	23.2	21.6	11.6	15.6	13.5	7.2	16.1	38.7	18.7
Indigenous children									
In preschool services ^c	3.6	0.8	6.1	9.1	5.9	4.8	3.0	42.1	4.9
In the community ^b	4.1	1.2	6.4	5.8	3.5	6.4	2.3	41.8	4.5
Children with a disability									
In preschool services ^d	6.2	5.8	2.3	2.7	15.1	na	4.2	6.8	5.3
In the community ^b	7.7	6.5	8.6	10.2	8.3	7.2	14.3	np	8.0
Children from regional areas									
In preschool services ^c	30.8	33.1	48.3	29.4	28.0	98.5	1.0	45.1	36.8
In the community ^b	28.0	27.5	45.1	24.5	26.2	97.7	0.1	48.2	32.3
Children from remote areas									
In preschool services ^c	1.3	0.3	8.2	9.1	5.6	1.5	..	54.9	4.7
In the community ^b	1.0	0.1	6.2	11.8	5.8	2.6	..	68.2	4.2

^a See source table for complete footnotes and definitions. ^b Data showing representation in the community are estimated from the ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing, except for "children with a disability", which are sourced from the ABS 2003 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. ^c 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. ^d Data are not directly comparable between jurisdictions because there is no national definition or standard on children with a disability. .. Not applicable. **na** Not available. – Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); ABS 2006 *Census of Population and Housing* (unpublished); ABS *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2003* (unpublished); tables 3A.3, 3A.4, 3A.5, 3A.6, 3A.7, 3A.8, 3A.9 and 3A.10; 2008 Report, table 3.3, p. 3.15.

Data on Indigenous attendance in preschools were not available for this Report. However, Indigenous enrolments between 2002-03 and 2006-07 increased slightly in almost all jurisdictions, and nationally are similar to Indigenous children's representation in the community (figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Proportion of Indigenous children aged 3–5 years, in the community and enrolled at preschools a, b, c, d



a Data showing representation in the community are estimated from the ABS 2006 *Census of Population and Housing*. **b** Data for the representation in preschool services are from State and Territory enrolment data. **c** All Indigenous data relate to people who self-identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent. **d** The ABS Census Post Enumeration Survey has estimated an undercount of Indigenous people in the 2006 Census, and the estimates of the proportional representation in the community of Indigenous children should be treated with caution.

Source: ABS 2006 *Census of Population and Housing* (unpublished); State and Territory governments (unpublished); 2008 Report, figure 3.3, p. 3.16.

Future directions in performance reporting

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

Improving the completeness and comparability of data

Potential new sources of data

New sources of Indigenous data may be able to be used in future Reports. The National Preschool Census 2007 includes a question on attendance, which may be used to report on the ‘Indigenous preschool attendance’ indicator in the 2009 Report.

Attachment tables

Attachment 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 3A.3 is table 3 in the children's services attachment). The tables included in the attachment are listed below.

Table 3A.1	Representation of special needs groups in attendees at Australian Government approved child care services, children aged 0–12 (per cent)
Table 3A.2	Representation of special needs groups in attendees at Australian Government approved child care services (per cent), by age group, 2006
Table 3A.3	Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, New South Wales
Table 3A.4	Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Victoria
Table 3A.5	Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Queensland
Table 3A.6	Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Western Australia
Table 3A.7	Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, South Australia
Table 3A.8	Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Tasmania
Table 3A.9	Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Australian Capital Territory
Table 3A.10	Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Northern Territory