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# A Early childhood, education and training preface

## Part A: Early childhood, education and training preface

Education is a lifelong activity, beginning with early childhood education and care (ECEC). Education occurs in a variety of settings — including child care, preschool and the three sectors that comprise Australia’s education and training system (the school education, vocational education and training [VET] and higher education sectors). This Report covers children’s services (including child care and preschools), school education and VET.

From the *Report on Government Services 2008* (2008 Report) onwards, the ‘Early childhood, education and training’ section of the Report (previously ‘Education’) will include the Children’s services chapter. The Children’s services chapter has been moved into this section in recognition of the importance of children’s services in providing early cognitive and social development, and the links between this development and educational outcomes. Governments have more recently focused on ECEC as part of a continuum with school education — a seamless process of learning and development from 0 to 18 years.

Australia’s system of education has a range of objectives, some of which are common across all sectors of education (for example, to increase knowledge) while others are more specific to a particular sector.

- The objectives of children’s services are to meet the care, education and development needs of children in a safe and nurturing environment, and provide support for families in caring for their children (2008 Report, box 3.1). Children’s services have both education and care objectives and the Children’s services chapter continues to present both of these.
- The objectives of the school education sector, as reflected in the national goals for schooling (2008 Report, box 4.1), include a focus on developing the capacities and talents of all young people so they have the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life.
- The objectives of the VET sector, as reflected in the national strategy for VET

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2004–10 (2008 Report, box 5.3), include a focus on giving industry a highly skilled workforce to support strong performance in the global economy; making employers and students the centre of VET; strengthening communities and regions economically and socially through learning and employment; and giving Indigenous Australians skills for viable jobs and ensure their learning culture will be shared.

- The objectives of the higher education sector, as reflected in the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*, include contributing to the development of cultural and intellectual life in Australia, and appropriately meeting Australia's social and economic needs for a highly educated and skilled population.

Australian, State and Territory governments fund government and non-government providers to deliver child care, preschool services and formal education and training services. Government providers include preschools, government schools (primary and secondary), technical and further education (TAFE) institutes, and universities. Non-government providers include child care centres, privately operated preschools and schools, private registered training organisations in the VET sector and private Higher Education institutions.

Chapter 3 covers the performance of children's services, including child care and preschool programs, which provide a variety of educational and developmental experiences for children before full time schooling. Chapter 4 covers the performance of school education. Some comparisons between the government and non-government school systems are included. Chapter 5 covers the performance of the VET sector.

Some of the performance indicators in chapters 3, 4 and 5 were also reported as key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage in the report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007* (SCRGSP 2007).

## References

SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2007, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.