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## 3 Children's services

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#### **Attachment tables**

Attachment tables are identified in references throughout this Indigenous Compendium by an 'A' suffix (for example, in this chapter, table 3A.3). As the data are directly sourced from the 2010 Report, the Compendium also notes where the original table, figure or text in the 2010 Report can be found. For example, where the Compendium refers to '2010 Report, p. 3.15' this is page 15 of chapter 3 of the 2010 Report, and '2010 Report, table 3A.2' is attachment table 2 of attachment 3A of the 2010 Report. A full list of attachment tables is provided at the end of this chapter, and the attachment tables are available from the Review website at ([www.pc.gov.au/gsp](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp)).

Children's services aim to meet the care, education and development needs of children. In this chapter, child care services are those provided to children aged 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. This chapter is included in the 'Early childhood, education and training' section of the *Report on Government Services 2010* (2010 Report) because of the important links between children's services and education.

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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/or licensing are involved.

### **Indigenous data in the Children's services chapter**

The Children's services chapter in the 2010 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), 2008-09
- representation of Indigenous children in State and Territory Government child care and preschools (compared to their representation in the community), 2008-09
- Indigenous children enrolled in State and Territory Government preschool services, 2004-05 to 2008-09
- children absent from non-government preschools, 2008.

The arrangements for departmental responsibility for early childhood education and care vary across State and Territory governments. There are also differences across states and territories for early childhood education program names and starting ages. To provide some clarity on these arrangements, a matrix showing basic information on child care and preschool education programs, such as agency responsibility, program names and starting ages, has been included in attachment table 3A.1.

The Australian Government provides supplementary funding to support the participation of Indigenous children in preschool programs. In 2009, an estimated \$9.1 million was provided on a per person and project basis to 1263 preschools. The funding covers 8278 full time equivalent Indigenous preschool enrolments (DEEWR unpublished).

### **Framework of performance indicators**

Data for Indigenous people are reported for a subset of the performance indicators for children's services in the 2010 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 2010 Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, the text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary.

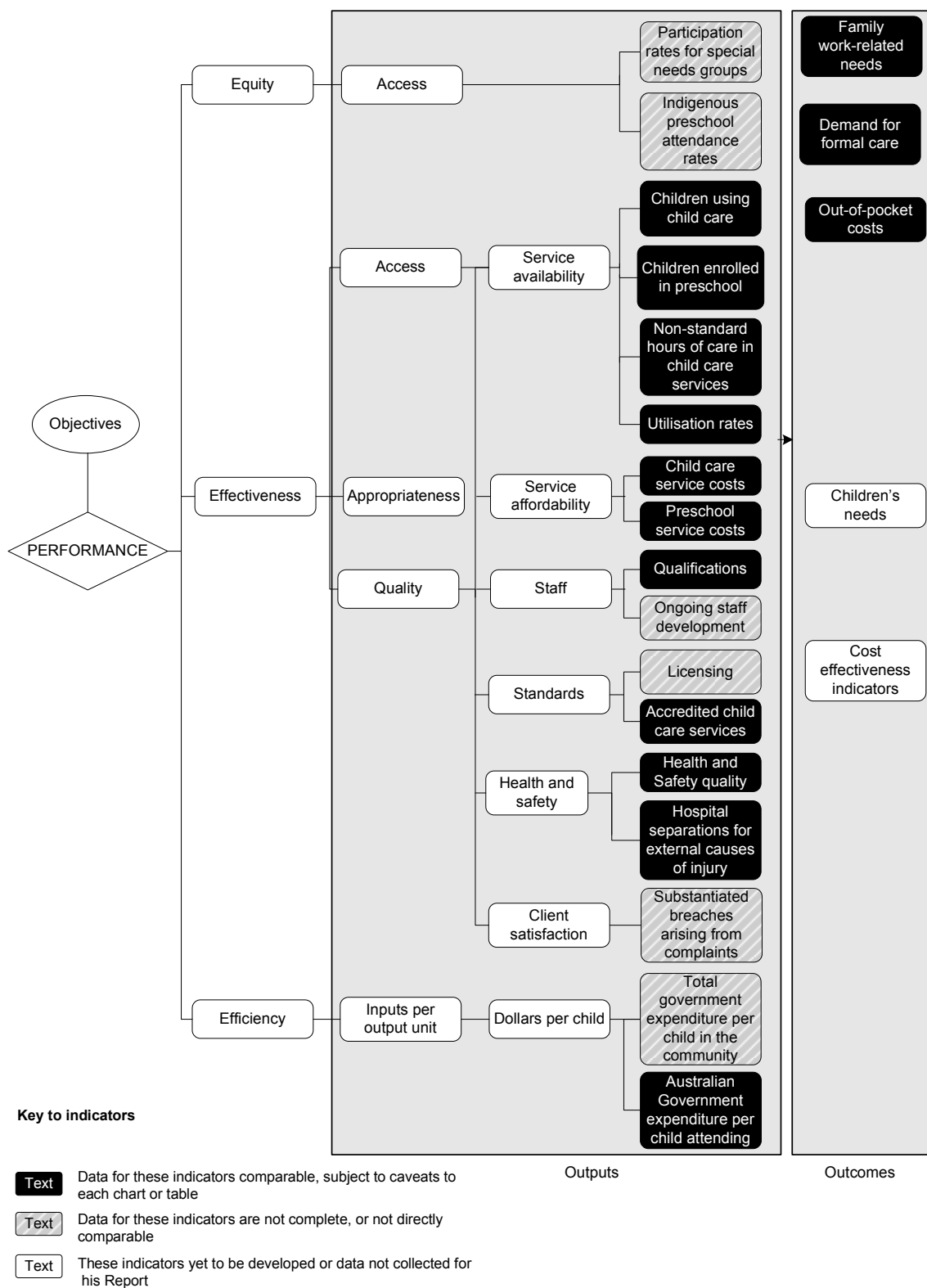
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The Report's statistical appendix contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. These data cover a range of demographic and geographic characteristics, including age profile, geographic distribution of the population, income levels, education levels, tenure of dwellings and cultural heritage (including Indigenous and ethnic status) (appendix A).

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed six National Agreements to enhance accountability to the public for the outcomes achieved or outputs delivered by a range of government services, (see 2010 Report, chapter 1 for more detail on reforms to federal financial relations). The agreements include sets of performance indicators, for which the Steering Committee collates annual performance information for analysis by the COAG Reform Council (CRC).

None of the National Agreements relate specifically to children's services. The *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* (NIRA) establishes specific outcomes for reducing the level of disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians, and includes an indicator relating to access to quality early childhood education for Indigenous children. The measurement details of NIRA reporting were under development at the time of preparing this Report. It is anticipated that this indicator will be incorporated into the Children's services chapter for the 2011 Report.

Figure 3.1 Performance indicators for children's services



Source: 2010 Report, figure 3.2, p. 3.15.

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## Participation rates for special needs groups

‘Participation rates for special needs groups’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that services are provided in an equitable manner to all special needs groups in the community, and that there is consideration of the needs of those groups which can have special difficulty in accessing services (box 3.1).

### Box 3.1 Participation rates for special needs groups

‘Participation rates for special needs groups’ is defined as the proportion of children using child care and preschool 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, Indigenous children, children from low income families, children with disability, and children from regional and remote areas.

If the representation of special needs groups among children’s services users is broadly similar to their representation in the community, this can indicate equity of access. Therefore, a higher participation rate is desirable.

Data reported for this indicator are not directly comparable.

Data for participation by special needs groups using Australian Government approved child care services for 2008-09 were drawn from the Australian Government Child Care Provider Survey (AGCCPS) and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) administrative systems. Box 3.2 contains more information on the AGCCPS.

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### **Box 3.2 Australian Government Child Care Provider Survey**

The Australian Government Child Care Provider Survey (AGCCPS) was conducted for the first time in 2008-09 and replaces the Australian Government Census of Child Care Services (AGCCCS) as the source for data that was not available from Australian Government administrative sources. The AGCCCS was last conducted in 2006 and has been discontinued.

The 2008-09 AGCCPS collected information on children with special needs and staff in Australian Government approved child care services. Data were collected from child care services during a sample week in November 2008 for all service types except vacation care. Data on vacation care services were collected in a sample week during school holidays (which varied across jurisdictions) in June and July 2009.

For consistency, the same information was collected in the AGCCPS as in the AGCCCS. Although data from the AGCCPS and AGCCCS presented in this chapter are weighted for the full population of services, variation in the response rates and different weighting methods affect the comparability of data across the collections.

*Source:* DEEWR (unpublished).

At a national level, Indigenous children aged 0–12 years participated in child care at a lower rate (2.3 per cent) than their representation in the community (4.4 per cent). This was also the case for both the 0–5 age group and the 6–12 age group (tables 3.1 and 3A.2).

Data on representation of special needs groups in State and Territory funded and/or provided child care, for children aged 0–12, are presented in table 3A.4.

**Table 3.1 Proportion of children aged 0–12 years from special needs groups attending Australian Government approved child care services, 2008-09 (per cent)<sup>a, b, c, d</sup>**

	<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>
<i>Children from non-English speaking backgrounds</i>									
In child care services	18.0	17.2	7.3	9.7	9.3	4.2	10.3	11.5	13.2
In the community, 2006	23.2	21.7	11.9	15.5	13.7	7.2	16.2	36.8	18.8
<i>Indigenous children</i>									
In child care services	2.5	0.9	3.1	2.4	2.1	1.8	1.4	10.6	2.3
In the community, 2006	4.1	1.2	6.2	5.6	3.3	6.5	2.3	39.2	4.4
<i>Children from low income families</i>									
In child care services	24.4	23.7	24.7	22.7	24.6	24.8	9.6	16.2	23.9
In the community, 2007-08	24.5	23.1	20.9	21.0	26.6	33.8	10.8	18.9	23.2
<i>Children with disability</i>									
In child care services	3.8	2.5	2.6	2.5	5.5	2.7	1.9	3.7	3.2
In the community, 2003	8.0	6.8	7.6	8.9	8.8	6.2	7.5	np	7.7
<i>Children from regional areas</i>									
In child care services	26.3	24.6	32.5	20.5	19.4	99.2	0.1	79.1	28.5
In the community, 2006	28.9	28.2	45.9	24.8	26.7	97.9	0.2	51.4	33.1
<i>Children from remote areas</i>									
In child care services	0.2	–	1.1	3.4	1.7	0.8	..	21.0	1.0
In the community, 2006	0.7	0.1	4.4	8.6	4.4	2.0	..	50.7	3.0

<sup>a</sup> Data on children in child care services represent the population of children attending child care in 2008-09. Data on representation in the community are reported for different years due to the availability of data and are sourced from the ABS *Survey of Disability and Housing 2003*, *2006 Census of Population and Housing* and the *Survey of Income and Housing 2007-08*. <sup>b</sup> Data on child care services for 2008-09 are not directly comparable to previous years data (presented in table 3A.3) due to a change in data source. Refer to box 3.2, 2010 Report, box 3.1, and table 3A.3 for more information. <sup>c</sup> See source table for complete footnotes and definitions. <sup>d</sup> Data in italics have relative standard errors above 25 per cent, and need to be used with caution. .. Not applicable. – Nil or rounded to zero. np Not published.

Source: DEEWR (unpublished) administrative data collection and *Australian Government Child Care Provider Survey 2008-09*; ABS (unpublished) *Survey of Income and Housing 2007-08*, Cat. no. 6523.0, *2006 Census of Population and Housing*, and *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2003*, Cat no. 4430.0; table 3A.3; 2010 Report, table 3.4, p. 3.18.

Data on the representation of special needs groups for children in State and Territory government funded and/or provided preschools are provided in table 3.2. For jurisdictions that were able to provide data, the patterns for children from special needs groups in preschool varied. Nationally, the representation of Indigenous children aged 3–5 years in preschool (4.9 per cent) was higher than their representation in the community (4.5 per cent) though this varies across jurisdictions.

**Table 3.2 Proportion of children (aged 3–5 years) from special needs groups enrolled in State and Territory funded or provided preschools, 2008-09 (per cent)<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

<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<sup>d</sup></i>
Children from non-English speaking backgrounds									
In preschool services	10.1	16.9	3.8	na	11.0	na	17.3	na	12.3
In the community, 2006	23.2	21.6	11.6	15.6	13.5	7.2	16.1	38.7	18.7
Indigenous children									
In preschool services	4.0	0.9	8.0	8.9	6.3	4.9	3.0	43.2	4.9
In the community, 2006	4.1	1.2	6.4	5.8	3.5	6.4	2.3	41.8	4.5
Children with disability									
In preschool services <sup>e</sup>	5.4	6.6	2.2	3.0	14.1	na	3.4	5.1	6.1
In the community, 2003	7.7	6.5	8.6	10.2	8.3	7.2	14.3	np	8.0
Children from regional areas									
In preschool services	29.4	24.6	40.8	9.7	26.4	98.6	0.8	46.5	27.3
In the community, 2006	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	1.0	0.1	7.4	8.5	6.1	1.4	..	53.5	3.7
In the community, 2006	1.0	0.1	6.2	11.8	5.8	2.6	..	68.2	4.2

<sup>a</sup> Data on children in preschool services represent the population of children enrolled in preschool in 2008-09. Data on representation in the community are reported for different years due to the availability of data and are sourced from the ABS *Survey of Disability and Housing 2003*, *2006 Census of Population and Housing* and the *Survey of Income and Housing 2007-08*. <sup>b</sup> See source table for complete footnotes and definitions. <sup>c</sup> Data exclude innovative or flexible services that receive direct funding from the Australian Government and are targeted towards children from these groups. Data on preschool services can include some children aged 3 years or 5 years for all jurisdictions. Preschool data in the NT can include some children aged greater than 5 years in very remote areas. <sup>d</sup> Data for Australia for children from non-English speaking backgrounds and children with disability in preschool are the total of the sum of the states and territories for which data are available, and should not be interpreted as national data. Data for Australia for children from regional and remote areas in preschool, and data on the representation in the community represent all states and territories and can be interpreted as national data. <sup>e</sup> Data on children with disability are not directly comparable because the definition of disability varies across jurisdictions. **na** Not available. **..** Not applicable.

*Source:* State and Territory governments (unpublished); ABS (unpublished) *2006 Census of Population and Housing* and *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2003*, Cat. no. 4430.0; table 3A.4; 2010 Report, table 3.5, p. 3.20.

## Indigenous preschool attendance rates

‘Indigenous preschool attendance rates’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that services are provided in an equitable manner to all special needs groups in the community, and that there is consideration of the needs of those groups which can have special difficulty in accessing services (box 3.3).



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### **Box 3.3 Indigenous preschool attendance rates**

‘Indigenous preschool attendance rates’ is defined as the number of Indigenous children absent from non-government preschools, as a proportion of all Indigenous children enrolled in non-government preschools. A child is deemed absent if they missed one or more of the sessions they were enrolled in during the reference week. Attendance rates are measured by absentee rates.

Non-government preschools include preschool programs delivered in government funded, registered, licensed and/or approved services, and these arrangements vary across jurisdictions. Preschool programs operated by commercial providers are excluded (DEEWR 2009).

A low or decreasing absentee rate indicates a high or increasing rate of attendance at preschools, and is desirable.

Preschool attendance is not compulsory.

Data on Indigenous preschool attendance rates are limited to Indigenous children enrolled in non-government preschools, as Indigenous children enrolled in government preschools are not available.

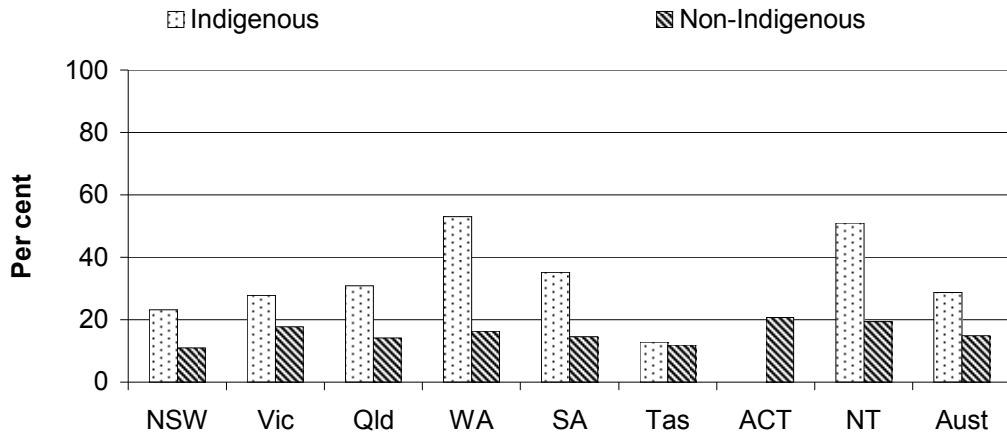
Data reported for this indicator are not complete.

Indigenous preschool enrolments provide a broad indication of access to preschool. Data on Indigenous preschool enrolments were provided for all jurisdictions except the ACT. Nationally in 2008-09, 10 200 Indigenous children were enrolled in State and Territory government funded and/or provided preschool. Of these Indigenous children, at least 4320 were enrolled in preschool in the year before full time school (table 3A.4). Data on Indigenous children’s representation in preschool compared with their representation in the community are presented in table 3.3. Data on Indigenous children enrolled in preschool for the period 2004-05 to 2008-09 are presented in 3A.5.

‘Indigenous preschool attendance rates’ provide a broad indication of the participation of Indigenous children in preschools. These data are sourced from the National Preschool Census (NPC) and relate only to non-government preschools. These data can overlap with the preschools data provided by State and Territory governments and are therefore not directly comparable with other preschool data included in the Report. The NPC collected data from 98 per cent of the 3536 non-government preschools in scope for the 2008 NPC (DEEWR 2009). This represents approximately 68 per cent of all government and non-government preschools, though this proportion varies considerably across jurisdictions (from 7.9 per cent in the NT, to 100.0 per cent in Victoria) (table 3A.6). Data for jurisdictions with few non-government preschools should be interpreted with care.

Nationally in 2008, non-attendance by Indigenous children (28.6 per cent) was higher than non-attendance by non-Indigenous children (14.8 per cent) (figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.2 Enrolled children absent from non-government preschools, 2008<sup>a, b, c, d, e</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Data on attendance are limited to non-government preschools, and exclude government preschools. At the national level, approximately 68 per cent of children are in preschools deemed to be non-government, though this percentage varies across jurisdictions: 90 per cent in NSW, 100 per cent in Victoria, 93 per cent in Queensland, 28 per cent in WA, 22 per cent in SA, 25 per cent in Tasmania, 12 per cent in the ACT, and 8 per cent in the NT. Preschool attendance data for jurisdictions with a small proportion of non-government preschools should be interpreted with care. <sup>b</sup> Preschool attendance is not compulsory. <sup>c</sup> Attendance was measured during the week of 28 July–1 August 2008. Children are counted as absent if they miss one or more of the sessions that they were enrolled in during this week. Absences due to illness can be higher during winter than at other times of the year. <sup>d</sup> Data for non-Indigenous children are derived from data on Indigenous children and all children. <sup>e</sup> There were no Indigenous children enrolled in non-government preschools in the ACT in 2008.

Source: DEEWR (unpublished) *National Preschool Census 2008*; table 3A.6; 2010 Report, figure 3.3, p. 3.22.

## Future directions in performance reporting

### *COAG developments*

#### *Report on Government Services alignment with National Agreement reporting*

It is anticipated that future editions of the Children's services chapter will align with applicable *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* (NIRA) indicators. Further reporting changes might result from future developments in NA and National Partnership reporting.

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## 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). Attachment tables are on the Review website ([www.pc.gov.au/gsp](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp)). Users without access to the website can contact the Secretariat to obtain the attachment tables (see contact details on the inside front cover of the Compendium). The tables included in the attachment are listed below.

<b>Table 3A.1</b>	Early Childhood Education and Care in Australia, as at 30 June 2009
<b>Table 3A.2</b>	Representation of special needs groups in attendees at Australian Government approved child care services (per cent), by age group, 2008-09
<b>Table 3A.3</b>	Representation of special needs groups in attendees at Australian Government approved child care services, children aged 0–12 (per cent)
<b>Table 3A.4</b>	Representation of children aged from special needs groups in State and Territory Government child care and preschool services, 2008-09
<b>Table 3A.5</b>	Indigenous children enrolled in State and Territory Government preschool services, 2004-05 to 2008-09
<b>Table 3A.6</b>	Children absent from non-government preschools, 2008

## References

DEEWR (Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations) 2009, *National Preschool Census 2008*, Data Analysis Australia, Nedlands WA.