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## D Community services preface

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#### **Attachment tables**

There are no Community services attachment tables throughout this Indigenous Compendium.

Families are the principal providers of care for children, older people and people with disability (ABS 2001; Australian Government 2008). Community services aim to:

- support families to fulfil their caring roles
- provide care when families are unable to
- provide interventions where individual needs are not able to be met within the community without special intervention.

Community services provide support to sustain and nurture the functioning of individuals, families and groups, to maximise their potential for development and to enhance community well being (Australian Council of Social Service 2009). Although community services generally target individuals, they can be delivered at an institutional level. Services are typically provided by government and the not-for-profit sector, but the for-profit sector also has an important role (for example, as owners of aged care facilities). Community services also contribute to the development of community infrastructure to service needs (AIHW 2005).

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## **Cross-cutting community services issues**

### *Community services pathways*

Although this Report discusses three areas of community services in separate chapters, it is recognised that there are many linkages between different community services. Governments are increasingly emphasising the need for integrated, client centred community services.

Many community services are linked by the provision of different services to individuals at different stages of life. Other services are not as strictly age-specific and some individuals may receive multiple services at the same time — for example, a child who is in receipt of juvenile justice services together with homelessness, child protection or disability services. Disability services can continue throughout an individual's lifetime and overlap with the provision of aged care services.

The sequence of interventions or services can be referred to as 'pathways' of community service provision. However, there is limited information on the patterns of access by individuals to the range of community services, either concurrently or in succession over a lifetime. A greater understanding of the links between the use of various community services, the nature of these links, and whether interventions in one area of service provision result in reduced need for other services, will help to inform government social policy agendas.

An example of relevant research is a longitudinal study of Indigenous children (*Footprints In Time*) by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), into the links between early childhood experiences and later life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, covering areas such as health, culture, education, housing and family relationships (FaHCSIA 2008).

## **Future directions in performance reporting**

### *COAG developments*

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 National Healthcare Agreement, the National Disability Agreement, and the National Affordable

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Housing Agreement cover the areas of aged care, disability, and homelessness (formerly SAAP) services, while the National Indigenous Reform Agreement establishes specific outcomes for reducing the level of disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. The agreements include sets of performance indicators, for which the Steering Committee collates annual performance information for analysis by the COAG Reform Council (CRC).

*Report on Government Services alignment with National Agreement reporting*

It is anticipated that future editions of the Community services preface will align with applicable National Agreement indicators, including the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA). Further alignment between the Report and National Agreement indicators, and other reporting changes, might result from future developments in National Agreement and National Partnership reporting.

## **References**

- ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2001, *Community Services Australia, 1999-2000*, Cat. no. 8696.0, Canberra.
- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2005, *National Community Services Information Strategic Plan 2005–2009*, Cat. no. AUS 68, Canberra.
- Australian Council of Social Service 2009, *Australian Community Sector Survey Report 2009*, Strawberry Hills.
- Australian Government 2008, *Families in Australia: 2008*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- FaHCSIA (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) 2008, *Research News*, Issue 31, Canberra.