
2 Recent developments in the Report

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2.1 Developments in reporting

This is the eighteenth Report on Government Services (RoGS) produced by the Steering Committee. Each year, the Steering Committee endeavours to build on developments of previous years. Major enhancements to RoGS are in four categories:

- the inclusion of new performance indicators and reporting against indicators for the first time
- improvements to the meaningfulness and/or clarity of existing performance indicators
- improvements to the data reported against existing performance indicators, including:
 - improved comparability, timeliness and/or quality of data
 - expanded reporting for special needs groups (such as Indigenous Australians)
 - improved reporting of full costs to government.
- improvements to information reported about data quality.

Improvements to specific areas of RoGS are summarised in each chapter.

The review of RoGS

In December 2009, COAG endorsed the report of a Senior Officials and Heads of Treasuries Working Group review of RoGS. The review examined the ongoing usefulness of RoGS to its government, non-government and community stakeholders.

The review noted the central role of RoGS in reporting comparative information on government performance, and that:

- RoGS' original role as a tool for government had been complemented by a public accountability function
- the preponderance of submissions to the review were very supportive of RoGS, but there was scope for improvement in the comparability, timeliness, and quality of performance data
- some submissions suggested RoGS' scope be expanded to include government services that are not currently reported.

The review recommended that new terms of reference be prepared for the Review of Government Service Provision and for RoGS (subsequently endorsed by COAG 2010; www.pc.gov.au/gsp/review/tor), and set out a series of ongoing activities for the Steering Committee. Most of the review recommendations were implemented in previous editions of RoGS, with remaining recommendations incorporated into standard RoGS' processes.

The review recommended that the Steering Committee report on its operations to COAG every three years (commencing at the end of 2011-12). The Steering Committee provided its inaugural Report on operations (2009-10 to 2011-12) to COAG in September 2012. In December 2012, COAG noted the report and endorsed its recommendations. The report and a link to COAG's response is available from the Review website (www.pc.gov.au/gsp/review/report-on-operations-2012).

2.2 Key data issues

Notwithstanding ongoing improvements in reporting, there remains scope to improve, both by addressing gaps in reporting, and by improving the timeliness, comparability and quality of reported data.

Gaps in reporting

An examination of reporting across service areas identified the following major gaps:

- There continues to be a paucity of measures of cost-effectiveness (that is, measures of cost per outcome achieved). The lack of cost-effectiveness measures partly reflects the difficulty of collecting robust quantitative information on outcomes. In the absence of explicit cost effectiveness *indicators*, cost effectiveness can be analysed by examining combinations of RoGS' efficiency and effectiveness indicators.
- There are relatively few indicators of output quality, compared to the number of indicators for other output characteristics (effectiveness, access and appropriateness).

The Steering Committee has also identified the data issues that affect the quality of information in RoGS: timeliness of data and data availability; comparability of data; changes to administrative data collections; full costing of government services; and reporting of data for special needs groups.

Timeliness and data availability

As noted in chapter 1, recent data are more useful for policy decision making, but there can be a trade-off between the accuracy of data and their timeliness. The Steering Committee's approach is, where data are fit for purpose, to publish imperfect data with caveats. This approach allows increased scrutiny of the data and reveals the gaps in critical information, providing the foundation for developing better data over time. Three particular timeliness issues are:

- Lagged data, where data are not available for the most recent year (financial or calendar). While there have been recent improvements in several collections, this remains an issue for several annual administrative collections.
- Infrequent data, where data are not available on an annual basis. This is most often an issue for data sourced from infrequent surveys or the Census. However, the Steering Committee acknowledges that the benefits of more frequent reporting must be balanced against the costs of more frequent collection.
- Late provision of data, or resubmitted data. Notwithstanding the Steering Committee's flexibility in negotiating data deadlines to accommodate data providers, data continue to be submitted outside agreed extended timeframes, which has the potential to compromise report production processes and resultant report quality.

Table 2.1 summarises the time periods for data reported for performance indicators included in this RoGS. There have been improvements in timeliness of some collections for this edition, including:

- early childhood education and care family work related needs, and demand for formal care, data are for 2011, where the most recent previously available data were for 2008
- ambulance services emergency department patients by arrival method data are for 2011-12, where the most recent previously available data were for 2009-10
- health:
 - prevalence of health risk factors of adults data in Body Mass Index (BMI) categories, who are daily smokers and who are at risk of alcohol related harm are for 2011-12, where the most recent previously available data were for 2007-08
 - profile of employed workforce data are for 2011, where the most recent previously available data were for 2009
- housing and homelessness:
 - amenity/location and customer satisfaction data for public housing, State owned and managed Indigenous housing and community housing are for 2012, where the most recent previously available data were for 2007
 - specialist homelessness collection data are available for the first time and reported for the 2011-12 reference year — the previous homelessness data collection (Supported Accommodation Assistance Program) lagged by one year.

The following collections cannot yet provide either *descriptive or performance* data for the most current reference year (2011 or 2011-12):

- adult literacy and numeracy achievement from the ABS' *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey 2006* (2006) (only, other learning outcomes data are for more current years)
- school education financial (2010-11) and achievement of VET competencies data (2010)
- homicides' data (2009-10)
- fire deaths from all causes combined ABS' data (2010), (only, data from jurisdictions' administrative collections for landscape fire deaths are for 2011-12)
- fire hospitalisations' data (2010-11)

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- maternity services appropriateness (2010), quality (2010) and efficiency data (2009-10)
 - perinatal services (2010)
 - management of asthma from the ABS *National Health Survey 2007-2008* (2007-08)
 - specialised mental health services (2010-11)
 - unmet need for aged care (2009)
 - specialist disability services (2010-11) and social participation of people with disability sourced from the ABS *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers* (2009)
 - people under youth justice supervision (both in detention and in the community) from the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set (JJ NMDS) (2010-11) (only, data from jurisdictions' administrative collections are for 2011-12)
 - Indigenous community housing services financial (2010-11) and quality data (dwellings in need of major repair and of replacement, 2006)
 - community housing net recurrent cost per dwelling and rent collection rate and all data for Indigenous community housing (2011, and 2010-11)
 - Australians who are homeless (2011) (but a significant improvement where the most recent previously available data were for 2006).

Table 2.1 Time period of reported performance results, 2013 RoGS

<i>Indicator framework</i>	<i>At or earlier than 2009 or 2009-10^a</i>	<i>Previous year (2010 or 2010-11)</i>	<i>Current year (2011 or 2011-12)</i>	
Child care education and training	Child care, education and training	School readiness — transition to primary school; Participation in employment, education and training by Indigenous people; Attainment of qualifications by Indigenous people	..	All others
	Early childhood education and care	..	Participation of special needs groups in child care; Staff quality, qualifications and training for child care; Hospital separations of children with injuries requiring hospitalisation	All others
	School education	Learning outcomes — national science literacy for years 6 and 10, international learning outcomes data for 15 year olds in reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy; Completion — year 10	School expenditure; Participation — achievement of VET competencies; Learning outcomes — civics and citizenship literacy for years 6 and 10	All others
	VET	..	Student achievement — improved education/training status after training qualifications completed; Skill profile — qualifications completed	All others
Justice	Justice	..	Crime victimisation; Re-offending rates — offenders who were proceeded against more than once by police; Higher court defendants resulting in a guilty plea or finding	All others
	Police services	Victims of homicide	Crime victimisation; Reporting rates; Land transport hospitalisations; Magistrates court defendants resulting in a guilty plea or finding	All others
	Courts	..	..	All
	Corrective services	..	..	All
Emergency management	Emergency management	..	Deaths from emergency events	All others
	Fire services	Level of safe fire practices in the community; Residential structures with smoke alarms (most jurisdictions)	Fire deaths — all causes combined only; Fire injuries	Residential structures with smoke alarms (two jurisdictions); All others
	Ambulance services	All

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Table 2.1 (continued)

<i>Indicator framework</i>	<i>At or earlier than 2009 or 2009-10^a</i>	<i>Previous year (2010 or 2010-11)</i>	<i>Current year (2011 or 2011-12)</i>
Health	Potentially preventable diseases — cancers; Access to services compared to need by type of service	All others	Health risk factors; Mortality rates; Life expectancy; Median age at death; Health workforce
Public hospitals	..	All others	Emergency department waiting times; Total elective surgery waiting times; Adverse events in public hospitals healthcare associated infections; Health workforce; Patient satisfaction
Health Maternity services	Recurrent cost per maternity separation; Average length of stay in public hospitals	All others	Caesareans and inductions for selected primiparae; Apgar scores
Primary and community health	Chronic disease management — asthma; Influenza vaccination coverage for older people	Indigenous primary healthcare that provided early detection services; Selected potentially preventable hospitalisations for — vaccine preventable, acute and chronic conditions, for diabetes, and of older people for falls	All others
Mental health management	Prevalence of severe mental disorders	All others	Primary mental health care for children and young people; Social and economic inclusion of people with a mental illness

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Table 2.1 (continued)

<i>Indicator framework</i>	<i>At or earlier than 2009 or 2009-10^a</i>	<i>Previous year (2010 or 2010-11)</i>	<i>Current year (2011 or 2011-12)</i>
Community services	Independence of older people and their carers; Participation of people with disability and their carers in the community; Improving child development	Wellbeing of older people; Quality of life for people with disability and their carers	Jobless families with children
Aged care services	Unmet need for services to support older people requiring assistance with daily activities ^a	Assessed longer term care arrangements; Hospital patient days used by aged care type patients; Cost per output unit	All others
Services for people with disability	Client and carer satisfaction (three jurisdictions); Labour force participation and employment of people with disability and of carers	All others	Quality assurance processes (five jurisdictions); Client and carer satisfaction (three jurisdictions); Administrative efficiency
Child protection and out-of-home care	Client satisfaction (four jurisdictions)	Improved safety	All others
Youth justice	All others

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<i>Indicator framework</i>		<i>At or earlier than 2009 or 2009-10^a</i>	<i>Previous year (2010 or 2010-11)</i>	<i>Current year (2011 or 2011-12)</i>
Housing and homelessness services	Housing and homelessness	Low income households in rental stress	..	All others
	Social housing	Dwelling condition for ICH	Rent collection rate for community housing; All other indicators for ICH	All for public housing and SOMIH; All other indicators for community housing
	Homelessness services	..	..	All

ICH = Indigenous community housing. SHSC = Specialist Homelessness Services collection. SOMIH = State-owned and managed Indigenous housing. ^a Some data are collected infrequently. The following data, for example, affect the timeliness of reporting in this edition: asthma management data are from a survey conducted approximately triennially; influenza vaccination coverage for older people data are from a survey conducted approximately biennially or triennially; national years 6 and 10 learning outcomes data for each of three learning domains are collected in a rolling triennial cycle; international learning outcomes data for students aged 15 years in reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy were last collected in 2012 but were not available for this edition; independence of older people and their carers, unmet need of older people, and participation of people with disability and their carers in the community, data are from a survey conducted triennially; improving child development data are from an administrative collection undertaken triennially; wellbeing of older people, and quality of life for people with disability and their carers, data are from a survey conducted quadrennially; low income households in rental stress are from a survey conducted biennially; and dwelling condition for Indigenous community housing are from a survey last conducted in 2006. .. Not applicable.

Source: Sector overviews B–G and chapters 3–17.

Comparability of data

Data are generally considered to be directly comparable when definitions, counting rules and the scope of measurement are consistent (and if applicable, the sample size is large enough to be statistically reliable — explained in the statistical appendix). Performance indicator framework (PIF) diagrams in each chapter are shaded to reflect indicator comparability. Table 2.2 summarises the proportions of performance indicators in each service area (1) with comparable data and (2) with data reported, both comparable and not directly comparable. Of the 18 service area PIFs, 12 have over 50 per cent of indicators reported on a comparable basis.

Table 2.2 reports the proportion of indicators with data reported. It does not reflect the work undertaken to identify new indicators and associated measures, develop definitions and counting rules and identify relevant data collections. In addition, table 2.2 does not capture other aspects of improvements in reporting, for example:

- streamlining PIFs, by including previously separate indicators as measures under an overarching indicator, which reduces the number of separate indicators, without reducing the information available
- splitting of some indicators, as indicators and measures develop
- refining DQI, counting rules, data collection and data completeness, but without changing the overall status of an indicator
- replacing previously reported indicators with more meaningful indicators
- changing the scope of reporting to reflect changes to government policy priorities.

Table 2.2 shows that, overall, 51.9 per cent (or 135) of the 260 indicators are comparable. This proportion is similar to that of the 2012 RoGS, where 52.6 per cent (or 142) of the 270 indicators were comparable.

Table 2.2 Comparability of indicators, 2013 RoGS^{a, b}

<i>Service area indicator framework (year first reported)</i>	<i>Indicators reported on a comparable basis in 2013</i>		<i>Total indicators in 2013</i>
	<i>no.</i>	<i>% of all reported</i>	<i>no.</i>
<i>Child care, education and training</i>			
Early childhood, education and care (1997)	12	50.0	22
School education (1995)	5	55.6	9
Vocational education and training (1995)	10	80.0	10
<i>Justice</i>			
Police services (1995)	14	73.7	19
Courts (1995)	4	75.0	8
Corrective services (1995)	10	83.3	12
<i>Emergency management</i>			
Fire services (1998)	2	22.2	9
Ambulance services (1998)	2	18.8	16
<i>Health</i>			
Public hospitals (1995)	5	33.3	15
Maternity services (2001)	2	25.0	8
Primary and community health (1999)	21	95.7	23
Mental health management (1999)	12	60.0	20
<i>Community services</i>			
Aged care services (1997)	11	58.8	17
Services for people with disability (1997)	9	64.3	14
Child protection and out-of-home care (1995)	4	20.0	20
Youth justice (2009)	4	28.6	14
<i>Housing and homelessness</i>			
Social housing (1995 to 2008)	1	9.1	11
Homelessness services (1995)	12	53.8	13
Total or average	142	51.9	260

^a Changes can reflect merging of some indicators and splitting of others, as indicators and measures develop. Data do not capture changes in indicators over time, or replacement of indicators with more meaningful indicators. ^b Information is based only on indicators with data reported and does not reflect conceptual developments. .. Not applicable. – Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: SCRCSSP (1995–2002); SCRGSP (2003–2012a).

Changes to administrative data collections

The discontinuation of data sets and the establishment of new data sets have implications for performance reporting. The scope, comparability and accuracy of data can be affected, with particular consequences for time series comparisons. The establishment of new data collections can involve implementation problems that affect data quality for several years.

Major data developments currently underway will improve the quality of RoGS reporting in the future:

- for children's services — the Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set (ECEC NMDS) is being implemented under the *National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care*, which provides a framework for collecting a set of nationally comparable data for child care and preschool services. The ECEC NMDS has been developed by the AIHW, under the guidance of the Early Childhood Data Sub Group — a working group that operates under the auspices of the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC). In partnership with the Australian Government and the State and Territory governments, the ABS compiles a National ECEC Collection (*Experimental Estimates of Preschool Education Australia*) based on the ECEC NMDS outlined above. The first issue of the annual publication was released in early 2011 (ABS 2011). Other developments in this area include the *Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* and the *Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)*
- for school education — nationally consistent definitions of most student background characteristics have been adopted for national reporting on students' educational achievement and outcomes. Ministers have endorsed standard definitions of sex, Indigenous status, socioeconomic background, language background and geographic location. A definition of students with disability for nationally comparable reporting on students' outcomes is under development. Student background information collected from parents through the enrolment process using the agreed data collection specifications and method is linked to student assessment results
- for courts — studies by the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration (AIJA) of the quality and performance of court systems worldwide are underway. An AIJA seminar was held in July 2009, attended by Chief Justices, other members of the judiciary, and court administrators, to discuss the Courts chapter and ways in which performance indicators might be improved. In late 2009 a working group, funded by AIJA, was established to investigate how performance indicators might be made more relevant and informative. Some of the outcomes from this group have been implemented in this Report while others are under consideration for potential future implementation
- for disability services — under the COAG-endorsed National Disability Strategy 2010-2020, the first stage of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will commence on 1 July 2013, with sites in NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT. The first stage includes the establishment of a new National Disability Transition Agency to run the delivery of care and support to people with disability, their families and carers. The establishment of the NDIS

has the potential to influence the future direction of the Disability Services National Minimum Data Set and future RoGS' reporting.

Costing of services

In addition to the Review objective that expenditure on services be measured and reported on a comparable basis, a further objective of the Review is that efficiency estimates reflect the full costs to government. The Review has identified three priority areas for improving the comparability of unit costs, and developed appropriate guidelines in each case:

- including superannuation on an accrual basis (SCRCSSP 1998a)
- accounting for differences in the treatment of payroll tax (SCRCSSP 1999a)
- including the full range of capital costs (SCRCSSP 2001).

Other issues influence the comparability of cost estimates. Where possible, the Review has sought to ensure consistency in:

- accounting for the goods and services tax (GST)
- reporting accrued benefits to employees (such as recreation and long service leave)
- apportioning applicable departmental overhead costs
- reporting non-government sourced revenue.

Treasury and finance accounting guidelines in most jurisdictions require government agencies to adopt accrual accounting. Accrual accounting is based on the principle that the agency recognises revenue and expenses when they are earned and incurred, respectively. Cash accounting, in contrast, recognises revenue and expenses when they are collected and paid, respectively. The majority of agencies and jurisdictions have adopted accrual accounting. Table 2.3 provides an overview of the Review's progress in reporting on an accrual basis, meeting the principle of reporting full cost to government (incorporating depreciation and the user cost of capital) and adjusting for differences in superannuation and payroll tax.

The Steering Committee's preference is to remove payroll tax from reported cost figures, where feasible, so cost differences between jurisdictions are not caused by differences in jurisdictions' payroll tax policies. In some chapters, however, it has not been possible to separately identify payroll tax, so a hypothetical amount is included in cost estimates for exempt services.

Capital costs

Under accrual accounting, the focus is on the capital used (or consumed) in a particular year, rather than on the cash expenditure incurred in its purchase (for example, the purchase costs of a new building). Capital costs comprise two distinct elements:

- depreciation — defined as the annual consumption of non-current physical assets used in delivering government services
- the user cost of capital — the opportunity cost of funds tied up in the capital used to deliver services (that is, the return that could have been generated if the funds were employed in their next best use).

To improve the comparability of unit costs, the Steering Committee decided that both depreciation and the user cost of capital should be included in unit cost calculations (with the user cost of capital for land to be reported separately). The Steering Committee also agreed that the user cost of capital rate should be applied to all non-current physical assets, less any capital charges and interest on borrowings already reported by the agency (to avoid double counting). The rate applied for the user cost of capital is based on a weighted average of rates nominated by jurisdictions (currently 8 per cent).

Differences in asset measurement techniques can have a major impact on reported capital costs (SCRCSSP 2001). However, the differences created by these asset measurement effects are generally relatively small in the context of total unit costs because capital costs represent a relatively small proportion of total cost (except for housing). In housing, where the potential for asset measurement techniques to influence total unit costs is greater, the adoption under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (replaced by the NAHA from 1 January 2009) of a uniform accounting framework has largely prevented this from occurring. The adoption of national uniform accounting standards across all service areas would be a desirable outcome for the Review.

Table 2.3 Progress of unit cost comparability, 2013 RoGS

Service area/indicator framework	Accounting regime ^a	Full cost to government — element included			
		Depreciation	User cost of capital	Superannuation on accrual basis	Payroll tax consistent
<i>Child care, education and training</i>					
Early childhood, education and care	Accrual	✓	x	✓	x
School education	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
VET	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Justice</i>					
Police services	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
Courts	Accrual	✓	x	✓	✓
Corrective services	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Emergency management</i>					
Fire services	Accrual	✓	✓	x	✓
Ambulance services	Accrual	✓	✓	x	✓
<i>Health</i>					
Public hospitals	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maternity services	Accrual	✓	x	✓	✓
Primary and community health ^b	Accrual	..	..	..	..
Mental health management	Accrual	x	x	✓	x
<i>Community services</i>					
Aged care services ^b	Accrual	..	..	..	✓
Services for people with disability	Accrual	✓	x	✓	✓
Child protection and out-of-home care ^b	Accrual	✓	x	✓	x
Youth justice services	Accrual	✓	x	✓	x
<i>Housing and homelessness</i>					
Social housing	Accrual	✓	✓	✓	✓
Homelessness services ^b	Accrual	..	..	..	..

✓ = Most jurisdictions include this item or report it separately, or include it on an accrual basis. x = Most jurisdictions do not include or report this item, or do not include it on an accrual basis. ^a Accrual: most jurisdictions reported in accrual terms for the data in the 2013 RoGS. ^b Costs comprise mostly Australian Government transfer payments to private service providers or households. .. Not applicable.

Source: Chapters 3–17.

Other costing issues

Other costing issues include accounting for the GST, the apportionment of costs shared across services (mainly overhead departmental costs) and the treatment of non-government sourced revenue.

- Government agencies are treated in the same manner as other businesses for GST. That is, government agencies are not exempt from GST on their purchases,

and can claim input tax credits for the GST paid on inputs. Data reported in RoGS are net of GST paid and input tax credits received, unless otherwise specified. The GST appears to have little quantifiable impact on the performance indicators in RoGS.

- Full apportionment of departmental overheads is consistent with the concept of full cost recovery. The practice of apportioning overhead costs varies across the services in RoGS.
- The treatment of non-government sourced revenue varies across services in RoGS. Some services deduct such revenue from their estimates of unit costs. This is usually in cases where the amounts concerned are relatively small (for example, in police services and courts). The costs reported are therefore an estimate of net cost to government. However, where revenue from non-government sources is significant (such as with public hospitals, fire services and ambulance services), both the gross cost and the net cost to government are reported, in order to provide an adequate understanding of efficiency.

Reporting for special needs groups

Some chapters of RoGS focus on the performance of agencies in providing services to specific groups in society — for example, the chapters on aged care services, services to people with disability and children’s services. Across RoGS, the Steering Committee also seeks to report on the performance of agencies providing services for three identified special needs groups: Indigenous Australians; people living in communities outside the capital cities (that is, people living in other metropolitan areas, or rural and remote communities); and people from a non-English speaking background. However, for many services, there is a paucity of data on outcomes for these groups.

Indigenous Australians

In May 1997, the (then) Prime Minister asked the Review to give particular attention to the performance of mainstream services in meeting the needs of Indigenous Australians. Table 2.4 provides an indication of which service areas report at least one data item on Indigenous Australians.

Since 2003, the Steering Committee has compiled all of RoGS’ information on Indigenous Australians into a separate Indigenous compendium. The most recent compendium (of data from the 2012 RoGS) was released in April 2012

(SCRGSP 2012b). A compendium of Indigenous data from this edition will be released by mid-2013.

Table 2.4 Reporting of at least one data item on Indigenous Australians, 2013 RoGS

<i>Service area/indicator framework</i>	<i>Descriptive</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Outputs</i>		
			<i>Equity</i>	<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>Efficiency</i>
<i>Child care, education and training</i>					
Early childhood, education and care	x	x	✓	x	x
School education	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
VET	x	✓	✓	✓	x
<i>Justice</i>					
Police services	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Courts	x	x	x	x	x
Corrective services	✓	x	x	✓	x
<i>Emergency management</i>					
Fire services	x	x	x	x	x
Ambulance services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Health</i>					
Public hospitals	✓	x	x	✓	x
Maternity services	x	✓	x	x	x
Primary and community health	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Mental health management	✓	✓	✓	x	x
<i>Community services</i>					
Aged care services	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Services for people with disability	✓	x	✓	✓	x
Child protection and out-of-home care	✓	x	x	✓	x
Youth justice services	✓	x	x	✓	x
<i>Housing and homelessness</i>					
Social housing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Homelessness services	✓	✓	✓	✓	x

Source: Chapters 3–17.

In this Report, the term ‘Indigenous’ is used to describe Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. While the Steering Committee acknowledges the diversity of Australia’s Indigenous peoples, most of the available data on Indigenous Australians are for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people combined.

Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators report

In April 2002, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) commissioned the Steering Committee to produce a regular report on key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage. The terms of reference for the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators* (OID) report was updated in March 2009 and the new terms of reference for the Review, endorsed by COAG in 2010, encompasses the OID report. Five editions of the OID report have been published (SCRGSP 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011). The next edition of the OID report is anticipated to be released in 2014.

Indigenous Expenditure Report

In December 2007, COAG committed to expenditure reporting on services to Indigenous Australians. In October 2008, Treasury requested the Secretariat for the Review to provide secretariat services to the Indigenous Expenditure Report (IER) Steering Committee, an arrangement endorsed by COAG in 2009. In 2011, COAG transferred responsibility for developing and producing future editions of the *Indigenous Expenditure Report* to the Steering Committee for the Review. The former IER Steering Committee is continuing as the IER Working Group, providing expert advice to the Review Steering Committee.

Two editions of the IER have been published, in 2010 and 2012. The next IER is planned for release in mid-2014.

Data collection issues relating to Indigenous Australians

Many administrative data collections do not have accurate or complete identification of the Indigenous status of their clients. In some instances, the method and level of identification of Indigenous Australians appear to vary across jurisdictions. Further, while many surveys now include an Indigenous identifier, many do not include a sufficiently large sample to provide reliable results for the Indigenous population. The AIHW (2012) has examined the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in a number of its community services data collections, by analysing where Indigenous status is missing/not stated and makes a number of recommendations for jurisdictions to improve Indigenous data collection.

National work on improving Indigenous identification is ongoing. Under Schedule F of the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* (NIRA), the ABS and AIHW are undertaking work on improving Indigenous identification across a range

of data collections (COAG 2012). Activities by the ABS and AIHW (both under the NIRA and independently) include:

- an ongoing program to improve the identification of Indigenous status of clients in Australian, State and Territory governments' administrative systems. Priority is being given to the improvement of births and deaths statistics in all states and territories, as well as data for hospital separations, community services, education, housing and crime and justice
- work with other agencies to develop and support national Indigenous information plans, Indigenous performance indicators and Indigenous taskforces on a number of topics
- improving Indigenous enumeration in the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing, including data for small geographic areas
- an established cycle of Indigenous-specific surveys as part of the ABS Household Survey Program to provide Indigenous statistics on a three-yearly basis and an annual series of Indigenous labour force estimates
- producing publications related to improving methods for Indigenous statistics (for example, AIHW 2012).

The (then) Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) commissioned work to identify methodological issues in Indigenous data collections, outline how these are being addressed and identify any remaining gaps. The findings are presented in *Population and Diversity: Policy Implications of Emerging Indigenous Demographic Trends*, released in mid-2006 by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) (Taylor 2006). In mid-2007, MCATSIA commissioned further work on Indigenous population statistics from CAEPR, constructed around four projects:

- detailed regional analysis of change in Indigenous social indicators
- assessment of social and spatial mobility among Indigenous Australians in metropolitan areas
- development of conceptual and methodological approaches to the measurement of short term mobility
- case-study analyses of multiple disadvantage in select city neighbourhoods and regional centres.

Working Papers related to these projects are released as part of the CAEPR Working Paper Series (CAEPR 2011) and the Indigenous Population Project Series: 2011 Census Papers (for example, CAEPR 2012).

In December 2007 and March 2008, COAG agreed to explicit targets for improving the lives of Indigenous people, and in November 2008 established the NIRA, which incorporates the COAG Closing the Gap targets and was last revised in November 2012 (COAG 2012). The NIRA provides an integrated framework for the task of Closing the Gap, setting out the policy principles, objectives and performance indicators underpinning Closing the Gap and the specific steps governments are taking to meet the targets. The Steering Committee is committed to aligning relevant indicators in this RoGS with the Working Group on Indigenous Reform (WGIR) framework.

The Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services (CGRIS) provides a six monthly report to the Minister for Families Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The first report was noted at COAG on 7 December 2009. COAG decided that the WGIR will provide a progress report to COAG on recommendations in the CGRS report. The first WGIR progress report was noted by COAG at its April 2010 meeting. COAG also committed to continuing its monitoring of progress of the National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery (COAG 2010). The sixth (and most recent) CGRIS report was released in December 2012 (CGRIS 2012).

The Review will draw on these initiatives in future RoGS.

People living in rural and remote areas

The Steering Committee selectively reports on the performance of governments in delivering services to people in communities outside the capital cities. Table 2.5 indicates which service sectors are reporting at least one data item on services delivered to people in rural and remote areas.

Table 2.5 Reporting of at least one data item on rural and remote communities, 2013 RoGS

<i>Service area/indicator framework</i>	<i>Descriptive</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Outputs</i>		
			<i>Equity</i>	<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>Efficiency</i>
<i>Child care, education and training</i>					
Early childhood, education and care	x	x	✓	✓	x
School education	✓	✓	x	x	x
VET	x	✓	✓	x	x
<i>Justice</i>					
Police services	x	x	x	x	x
Courts	x	x	x	x	x
Corrective services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Emergency management</i>					
Fire services	x	x	x	✓	x
Ambulance services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Health</i>					
Public hospitals	✓	x	x	✓	x
Maternity services	x	x	x	x	x
Primary and community health	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Mental health management	x	✓	✓	x	x
<i>Community services</i>					
Aged care services	✓	x	✓	✓	x
Services for people with disability	✓	x	✓	✓	x
Child protection and out-of-home care	x	x	x	x	x
Youth justice services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Housing</i>					
Social housing	✓	x	x	x	x
Homelessness services	x	x	x	x	x

Source: Chapters 3–17.

Where geographic location is used to identify groups with special needs, data are usually disaggregated according to a geographic classification system, either:

- the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) classification system developed in 1994 by the Department of Primary Industries and Energy, and the then Department of Human Services and Health (now Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing), or a variant of RRMA
- the ABS' Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) of remoteness areas (ABS 2009a), based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) developed by Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and the National Key Centre For Social Applications of Geographic

Information Systems. A new geographical framework, the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) replaced the ASGC, effective from July 2011.

- The first four volumes of the new ASGS have been released: Main Structure and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (ABS 2011a); Indigenous Structure (ABS 2011b); Non ABS Structures (ABS 2011c); and Significant Urban Areas, Urban Centres and Localities, Section of State (ABS 2012a).
- Volume five (anticipated to be released in 2013) will detail the Remoteness Structure (ABS forthcoming).

Reporting data on rural and remote communities is complicated by the number of classification systems that exist. The chapters on early childhood education and care, VET, fire and ambulance services, aged care services, disability services and housing use the ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classification of remoteness areas.

A number of other services (public hospitals, primary and community health and protection and support services) use the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) classification or a variant (DPIE and DSHS 1994). The chapter on school education uses its own system developed for education ministers, known as the MCEECDYA (now SCSEEC) Geographic Location Classification, which draws on the RRMA classification and ABS's Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (Jones 2000).

People from a non-English speaking background

A number of chapters in RoGS include data on the performance of governments in providing services to people from a non-English speaking background. Table 2.6 indicates which services have reported at least one performance indicator for all jurisdictions.

Reporting data on people from a non-English speaking background is complicated by:

- undercounting. The ABS' Post Enumeration Survey conducted after the 2011 Census found that net undercount rates for country of birth were very high (around 1 million) for people born in non-English speaking countries (ABS 2012b). Problems with self-identification are likely to be apparent with collecting data on language background, which will adversely affect the quality of data even if all collections were to adopt an ABS' standard definition as an identifier

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- the number of classification systems that exist. Various chapters of RoGS use different classification systems based on: people speaking a language other than English at home (reported for early childhood education and care, VET and breast cancer detection); people with a language background other than English (reported for school education); and people born in a non-English speaking country (reported for aged care services, services for people with disability and homelessness services).

In conjunction with a multicultural policy (Australian Government 2011a), part of the Australian Government's response to the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council's recommendations (AMAC 2010) includes a plan to work with the Steering Committee to ensure that data collected by government agencies on client services can be disaggregated by cultural and linguistic diversity items to inform reporting in RoGS (Australian Government 2011b). In June 2012 an Access and Equity Inquiry Panel (DIAC 2012) recommended that the Australian, State and Territory governments explore using the RoGS' process to better understand access and equity performance in relation to culturally and linguistically diverse clients (DIAC 2012).

Table 2.6 Reporting of at least one data item on people from a non-English speaking background, 2013 RoGS

Service area/indicator framework	Descriptive	Outcomes	Outputs		
			Equity	Effectiveness	Efficiency
<i>Child care, education and training</i>					
Early childhood, education and care	x	x	✓	x	x
School education	✓	✓	x	x	x
VET	x	✓	✓	x	x
<i>Justice</i>					
Police services	x	x	x	x	x
Courts	x	x	x	x	x
Corrective services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Emergency management</i>					
Fire services	x	x	x	x	x
Ambulance services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Health</i>					
Public hospitals	x	x	x	x	x
Maternity services	x	x	x	x	x
Primary and community health	x	✓	x	x	x
Mental health management	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Community services</i>					
Aged care services	x	x	✓	x	x
Services for people with disability	✓	x	✓	✓	x
Child protection and out-of-home care	x	x	x	x	x
Youth justice services	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Housing</i>					
Social housing	x	x	x	x	x
Homelessness services	x	x	✓	✓	x

Source: Chapters 3–17.

2.3 ‘Cross-cutting’ issues

There is growing emphasis on the management of policy issues that cover more than one service-sector, service area or ministerial portfolio — for example, government policies aimed at specific client groups such as older people, females, children, Indigenous Australians, people in rural and remote areas and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Improving the management of these issues can contribute to more effective and efficient service provision. Greater efficiency can come from more clearly defined priorities and from the elimination of duplicated or

inconsistent programs. Improved outcomes can also result from a more holistic and client centred approach to service delivery.

Cross-cutting issues arise in several areas of RoGS. The frameworks in the sector overviews are one means of reporting outcomes for a range of different services working in combination. In other cases, the breadth of services covered by RoGS allows relevant information to be drawn from across the report (although current data limitations constrain the ability to disaggregate information for particular target groups in some services). For example, the mental health management chapter focuses on the performance of specialised mental health services, but people with a mental illness also access: primary and community health services (such as general practitioners, and drug and alcohol services) (chapter 11); aged care services (chapter 13); services for people with disability (chapter 14); housing (chapter 16); and, some people with a mental illness also enter corrective services (chapter 8).

Other references in this RoGS to cross-cutting issues include:

- workforce participation and the availability of child care services, and VET in schools and non-linear education and training pathways (sector overview B)
- mortality rates and life expectancy are influenced by education, public health, housing, primary and community health, and hospital services (as well as external factors) (sector overview E)
- potentially preventable hospitalisations are influenced by primary and community health services (chapter 11)
- long term aged care in public hospitals (chapter 13)
- younger people with disability in residential aged care facilities (chapter 14)
- community services pathways and Home and Community Care (HACC) across the community services sector (sector overview F)
- rates of return to prison and community corrections are influenced by the activities of police, courts and corrective services (as well as other factors) (sector overview C)
- changes in education outcomes over time for children in custody or on guardianship orders, compared to changes in education outcomes over time for all children (chapter 15)
- the contributions of many services to child protection services. Police services investigate serious allegations of child abuse and neglect, courts decide whether a child will be placed on an order, education and child care services provide services for these children, and health services support the assessment of child

protection matters and deliver therapeutic, counselling and other services (discussed primarily in chapter 15)

- close links between homelessness services and other forms of housing assistance reported in Housing, particularly crisis accommodation (sector overview G).

Counter-terrorism

A number of service areas included in this RoGS contribute to government initiatives to improve security throughout Australia. In particular, emergency services, police and public hospitals are key services involved in the inter-jurisdictional National Counter Terrorism Plan.¹ While performance data in this RoGS do not explicitly include the details of these government activities, such activities need to be kept in mind when interpreting performance results — for example:

- counter-terrorism activities might have led to an increase in government expenditure, but the outputs or outcomes (for example, increased security patrols, emergency planning or improved security) may not show up in the data in the chapters. In this case, performance results for efficiency indicators might suggest a decrease in value for money
- counter-terrorism requirements might have been accommodated by an increase in productivity rather than an increase in expenditure, but if the additional outputs or outcomes are not recorded in the chapters, then performance results will not reflect the improvement in productivity.

The agencies with the primary responsibilities for counter-terrorism such as the defence forces, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO 2012) and the relevant coordinating bodies are not within scope for this RoGS, so comprehensive reporting of counter-terrorism is not included.

¹ A National Counter Terrorism Committee with officials from the Australian, State and Territory governments has developed a National Counter Terrorism Plan. All governments have responsibilities under the Plan to prevent acts of terrorism or, if such acts occur, to manage their consequences in Australia (Attorney-General's Department 2009). The Counter-Terrorism White Paper 2010, *Securing Australia – Protecting our Community*, sets out Australia's counter-terrorism objectives and the means by which the Government will pursue them and provides that in relation to global counter-terrorism, Australia is committed to all United Nations counter-terrorism agreements. The White Paper reflects a number of improvements to Australia's approach to counter-terrorism and brings together for the first time, in a comprehensive manner, Australia's response to terrorism both domestically and internationally (DPM&C 2010).

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