
3 Early childhood education and care interpretative material

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The early childhood education and care (ECEC) interpretative material is supporting material and includes explanations of why indicators have been chosen, and wherever possible, a link to the stated objectives of the service. It includes indicator definitions, technical details defining how the indicator is measured and guidance on how the indicator is to be interpreted, including caveats and the indicator's completeness and comparability status.

Further information on the Report on Government Services including other reported service areas, the glossary and list of abbreviations is available at <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services>.

3.1 Indicators

Different delivery contexts, locations and types of clients can affect the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of ECEC services.

The comparability of performance indicator results is shaded in indicator interpretation boxes, figures and data tables as follows:

- Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time.
- Data are either not comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time or are not comparable across jurisdictions or both.

The completeness of performance indicator results is shaded in indicator interpretation boxes, figures and data tables as follows:

- Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required data are available for all jurisdictions.
- Data are incomplete for the current reporting period. At least some data were not available.

Outputs

Outputs are the services delivered (while outcomes are the impact of these services on the status of an individual or group) (see section 1). Output information is also critical for equitable, efficient and effective management of government services.

Equity

Access — ECEC participation by special needs groups

‘ECEC participation by special needs groups’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide ECEC services in an equitable manner, and that there is access for, and participation of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, vulnerable and disadvantaged children (box 3.1).

Box 3.1 ECEC participation by special needs groups

'ECEC participation by special needs groups' is defined by two measures:

- Children using child care, by special needs group — the proportion of children aged 0–5, 6–12 and 0–12 years enrolled in Australian Government CCS approved child care services who are from special needs groups, compared with the representation of these groups in the community. Special needs groups for this measure include children from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from low-income families, children with disability, and children from regional and remote areas.

Data reported for this measure are:

- comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions
- complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2016 and 2020 data are available for all jurisdictions.
- Preschool program participation, by special needs groups — the proportion of children enrolled in a preschool program from special needs groups, compared with the representation of these groups in the community. Data are provided for:
 - children enrolled in a preschool program in the YBFS who are from special needs groups, compared with the representation of these groups in children aged 4–5 years in the community
 - children aged 3–5 years enrolled in a preschool program who are from special needs groups, compared with the representation of these groups in the community.

Special needs groups for this measure include children from NESB, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from regional and remote areas, and children who are disadvantaged. Disadvantage is defined for this measure to be children residing in an area with a Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage quintile of 1. The disaggregation by disadvantage should be interpreted with care as it measures the disadvantage of the area where the child resides, rather than directly measuring the child's level of disadvantage or the service's level of disadvantage.

Data reported for this measure are:

- not comparable across jurisdictions for NESB children and children with disability (comparable for all other special needs groups)
- incomplete for the current reporting period for NESB. All required 2019 NESB data are not available for WA and the NT.

A high or increasing ECEC participation is desirable. If the representation of special needs groups among ECEC service users is broadly similar to their representation in the community, this suggests equitable access.

Effectiveness

Access — ECEC participation

‘ECEC participation’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that ECEC services are accessible (box 3.2).

Box 3.2 ECEC participation

‘ECEC participation’ is defined by two measures:

- Children using child care — the proportion of children who are enrolled in Australian Government CCS approved child care services by age group (0–5, 6–12 and 0–12 years)

Data reported for this measure are:

- comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time
- complete for the current reporting period (subject to caveats). All required 2019 data are available for all jurisdictions.

- Preschool program participation — the proportion of children who are enrolled in a preschool program in the YBFS. To be considered as enrolled, the child must have attended the preschool program for at least one hour during the reference period, or be absent due to illness or extended holiday leave and expected to return. State and Territory data are based on the location of the child’s residence.

Data reported for this measure are:

- comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time (from 2016 onwards)
- complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2019 data are available for all jurisdictions.

A higher or increasing proportion of children participating in ECEC services is desirable. However, this indicator can be difficult to interpret as this indicator does not provide information on parental preferences for using child care and preschool.

Access — Parent costs for ECEC services

‘Parent costs for ECEC services’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that ECEC services are affordable (box 3.3).

Box 3.3 Parent costs for ECEC services

‘Parent costs for ECEC services’ is defined by three measures:

- Child care service costs — the median weekly cost for 50 hours of Australian Government CCS approved long day care and family day care. Costs are before the reduction due to the CCS or Child Care Rebate.
- Child care costs as a proportion of weekly disposable income — the proportion of weekly disposable income that families spend on long day care and family day care before and after the payment of child care subsidies, for families with two income earners with a 60:40 income split and gross annual income of \$35 000, \$55 000, \$75 000, \$95 000, \$115 000, \$135 000, \$155 000, \$175 000, \$195 000 and \$215 000. This proportion is reported for families with one child attending long day care or family day care for 30 hours
- Preschool program costs — the median hourly cost of a preschool program (after subsidies), per child enrolled aged 4 and 5 years.

Median costs represent the middle value of the range of costs.

Provided the service quality is held constant, lower median service costs are desirable. While a similar proportion of income across income groups suggests a more equitable outcome. Families who use more care per week are expected to face higher out-of-pocket costs.

Various factors influence ECEC costs and care needs to be exercised when interpreting results, as:

- fees are set independently by ECEC service providers and there is significant variation in the fees across services
- costs are influenced by a number of factors including NQF approval requirements, award wages, and whether fees include charges for additional services such as nappies and meals, as well as localised issues such as, land values and rental costs, rates, and other localised costs of living
- median costs data may reflect particular scenarios of ECEC use and family income level, so do not reflect the out-of-pocket costs by families at varying levels of income or care usage
- for preschool program costs, there are a mix of providers (community, private and government). Differences in charging practices can be due to commercial or cost recovery decisions made by individual services. Some preschool programs, particularly those offered at government preschool services, have no tuition fees.

Data reported for this indicator are:

- comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time
- complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2019 data (preschool service costs) and 2020 data (child care service costs) are available for all jurisdictions.

Appropriateness — Non-standard hours of care in child care services

‘Non-standard hours of care in child care services’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that government funded child care services are accessible and flexible (box 3.4).

Box 3.4 **Non-standard hours of care in child care services**

‘Non-standard hours of care in child care services’ is defined as the proportion of Australian Government CCS approved child care services that provide non-standard hours of care, by service type. Definitions of ‘standard hours’ and ‘non-standard hours’ are provided in sub-section 3.2.

A high or increasing proportion of services providing non-standard hours of care can suggest greater flexibility of services to meet the needs of families. That said, this indicator does not provide information on demand for non-standard hours of care or whether available non-standard hours services meet the needs of users.

Provision of non-standard hours of care can be influenced by a range of factors, such as costs to services and parents, demand for care, availability of carers, and compliance with legislative requirements.

Data reported for this measure are:

- comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions but not over time. Data collected from the CCSS (2019 onwards) are not comparable with earlier years data under the Child Care Management System (CCMS).
- complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2020 data are available for all jurisdictions.

Appropriateness — Demand for ECEC

‘Demand for ECEC’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that ECEC services are accessible (box 3.5).

Box 3.5 Demand for ECEC

‘Demand for ECEC’ is defined as the proportion of children aged 0–12 years for whom additional formal child care or preschool services were currently required.

Additional care currently required refers to children who were already attending formal child care or preschool and parents wished for them to attend more, as well as children who did not attend any formal child care or preschool and parents wished for them to attend.

An increasing proportion of children with expressed need for additional ECEC may suggest that additional services are required. However, caution should be used when interpreting these data as they are not intended to represent the ‘unmet demand’ for formal child care or preschool services. The data do not identify the likelihood that a parent will take steps to access the care or preschool they require, or place their child in this care or preschool. Various factors including cost, location and the perceived suitability or quality of the service will have an influence on whether parents take these steps.

Data reported for this measure are:

- comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time
- complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2017 data are available for all jurisdictions.

Quality — Staff quality in ECEC

‘Staff quality in ECEC’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that ECEC services are high quality (box 3.6).

Box 3.6 Staff quality in ECEC

‘Staff quality in ECEC’ is defined by two measures:

- The proportion of paid primary contact staff employed by Australian Government CCS approved child care services with a relevant formal qualification (at or above Certificate level III), or three or more years of relevant experience.
- The proportion of teachers accessible to preschool programs (across all services, not just CCS approved services) who are at least three year university trained and early childhood qualified.

Data reported for these measures are:

- comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time for paid primary contact staff employed by Australian Government CCS approved child care services
- complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2016 data (for the first measure) and 2014 data (for the second measure) are available for all jurisdictions. As these data are prior to the CCS implementation in 2018, data on child care services relate to Child Care Benefit (CCB) approved child care services.

Some studies and research (for example, Huntsman [2008], OECD [2006], and Warren and Haisken-DeNew [2013]) have shown a link between education levels of ECEC staff and children’s learning outcomes, suggesting that a high or increasing proportion is desirable.

Quality — NQF quality and compliance

‘NQF quality and compliance’ is an indicator of governments’ objectives to ensure that ECEC services are high quality and are delivered in a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment (box 3.7).

Box 3.7 NQF quality and compliance


‘NQF quality and compliance’ is defined by two measures:


- Achievement of National Quality Standard (NQS) — defined as the proportion of NQF approved services with a quality rating, whose overall NQS rating is: ‘Meeting NQS’, ‘Exceeding NQS’ or ‘Excellent’.

Services receive an overall rating of Meeting NQS if they are rated as Meeting or Exceeding NQS in all seven quality areas. Services receive an overall rating of Exceeding NQS if four or more quality areas are rated as Exceeding NQS, including two of the four following quality areas: Quality Area 1, Quality Area 5, Quality Area 6 and Quality Area 7. The Excellent rating can only be awarded by the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), on application by the Approved Provider (ACECQA 2019) (see sub-section 3.2 for further information on NQS achievement).

A high proportion of services that achieve the NQS suggests a high quality of service provision.

Data reported for this measure are:

 comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time

 complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required data for 2020 are available for all jurisdictions.


- Confirmed breaches — defined as the number of confirmed breaches by NQF approved services, per 100 NQF approved services.


A confirmed breach is when a regulatory authority finds that a provider, nominated supervisor or family day care educator has failed to abide by relevant legislation, regulations or conditions at an NQF approved service.

Breaches vary in circumstance and severity. Some breaches can have serious implications for the quality of care provided to children (such as requirements to undertake criminal record checks for staff and requirements to install smoke detectors). Other breaches do not necessarily directly affect the quality of care (such as requirements to display NQF approval information).

All else being equal, a low or decreasing rate of confirmed breaches can suggest a higher quality service. A high or increasing rate of confirmed breaches does not necessarily mean that a jurisdiction has lower service safety and quality, as it might mean it has a more effective reporting and monitoring regime.

Data reported for this measure are:

 not comparable across jurisdictions due to differences in administrative and reporting procedures, but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time

 complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required data for 2019-20 are available for all jurisdictions.

Quality — Serious incidents

‘Serious incidents’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that ECEC services are delivered in a safe environment (box 3.8).

Box 3.8 **Serious incidents**

‘Serious incidents’ is defined as the number of serious incidents that have occurred at NQF approved services, per 100 NQF approved services. Serious incidents are incidents that seriously compromise the health, safety or wellbeing of children attending an ECEC service.

The scope of the serious incidents indicator is NQF approved services. Under regulation, an NQF approved service must notify the regulatory authority (within 24 hours) of any serious incident that involves a child that was being educated and cared for by an ECEC service.

Serious incidents includes any incidents: involving the death of a child; involving serious injury or trauma to, or illness of, a child; where the attendance of emergency services was sought (or ought reasonably to have been sought); and where a child has been locked in/out, removed from the premises in contravention of regulations, or is unaccounted for — see sub-section 3.2.

A low or decreasing rate of serious incidents may suggest safer ECEC services. Caution should be used in interpreting results within and across jurisdictions as variations may be affected by differences in the number of children (or hours of service delivery) per service. Nationally comparable data are not currently available on the number of children enrolled (or hours of service delivery provided) in NQF approved services. It should also be noted that the rate of serious incidents reflects the reporting practices of approved providers which can vary.

Data reported for this measure are:

- comparable across jurisdictions and over time (subject to caveats)
- complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2019-20 data are available for all jurisdictions.

Efficiency

Inputs per output unit — government recurrent expenditure per child

‘Government recurrent expenditure per child’ is an indicator of governments’ objective for ECEC services to be efficient (box 3.9).

Box 3.9 Government recurrent expenditure per child

Government recurrent expenditure per child is defined by three measures:

- Total government recurrent expenditure on ECEC per child in ECEC — the combined Australian Government and State and Territory government recurrent expenditure on ECEC per child in ECEC (children in child care and preschool services).

Data reported for this measure are:

■ not comparable across jurisdictions. Data are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time (from 2016-17 onwards), but are not directly comparable with prior years due to changes in coverage and methodologies affecting the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (NECECC)

■ complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2019-20 data are available for all jurisdictions.

- Total government recurrent expenditure on ECEC per child in the community — the combined Australian Government and State and Territory government recurrent expenditure on ECEC per child aged 0–12 years in the community.

Data reported for this measure are:

■ not comparable across jurisdictions, but are comparable (subject to caveats) within jurisdictions over time

■ complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2019-20 data are available for all jurisdictions.

- Australian Government recurrent expenditure per child attending CCS approved child care — the Australian Government recurrent expenditure per child aged 0–12 years attending Australian Government CCS approved child care services.

Data reported for this measure are:

■ comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time

■ complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2019-20 data are available for all jurisdictions.

Efficiency data should be interpreted with care because:

- changes in expenditure per child could represent changes in government funding policy. While high or increasing unit costs can reflect deteriorating efficiency, they can also reflect increases in the quality or quantity of service provided. Similarly, low or declining expenditure per child can reflect improving efficiency or lower quality or quantity. Provided the level and quality of, and access to, services remain unchanged, lower expenditure per child can indicate greater efficiency of government expenditure
- differences in reported efficiency results across jurisdictions can reflect differences in definitions and counting and reporting rules.

All Australian Government recurrent expenditure reported for this indicator is provided for child care services, whereas State and Territory government recurrent expenditure covers both child care and preschool services.

Outcomes

Family work-related needs for child care

‘Family work-related needs for child care’ is an indicator of governments’ objective for ECEC services to meet the needs of families, including enabling increased workforce participation (box 3.10).

Box 3.10 Family work-related needs for child care

‘Family work-related needs for child care’ is defined as the proportion of people aged 15 years and over not in the labour force due to caring for children, who report the main reason for not being in the labour force as child care service-related.

A relatively small or decreasing proportion of people not in the labour force due to caring for children who report the main reason for not being in the labour force as child care service-related may indicate that services are meeting the needs of families. However, there are a number of factors which affect the labour force participation decisions of people responsible for caring for children, of which child care service-related reasons are a subset. Also, due to the subjective nature of self-reporting, care should be taken when interpreting the data, particularly for child care service-related reasons.

The ABS data used for reporting against this indicator are collected in February of each year.

Data reported for this measure are:

- comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time
- complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2020 data are available for all jurisdictions.

ECEC outcomes

‘ECEC outcomes’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide ECEC services that meet the education, care, and development needs of children (box 3.11).

Box 3.11 **ECEC outcomes**

‘ECEC outcomes’ is defined as the proportion of children with ECEC experience who are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). The AEDC collects data from teachers on the early childhood development of children when they are in their first year of full time schooling. Children are considered developmentally vulnerable in a domain if they score below the 10th percentile. The domains are: language and cognitive skills; physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; and communications skills and general knowledge.

A low proportion of children who received ECEC reported as developmentally vulnerable is desirable and a lower proportion of children who received some ECEC reported as developmentally vulnerable compared to children who did not receive any ECEC could indicate that receiving ECEC leads to better development outcomes. However, results should be interpreted with caution as:

- these data report on the correlation between ECEC experience and development outcomes. The causal impact of ECEC experience on development outcomes cannot be determined from these data
- ECEC experience is just one factor contributing to development. A range of other factors also influence development outcomes, including parental and family circumstances and other services such as health and parenting support
- ECEC experience is reported by the teacher, and therefore, dependent on the teacher’s knowledge of the child’s previous experience
- the data do not include how much ECEC (for example, hours per week) children received
- not all children in the dataset have a complete response for whether or not they attended ECEC.

Data reported for this measure are:

- comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time
- complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period. All required 2012, 2015 and 2018 data are available for all jurisdictions.

3.2 Definitions of key terms

Capital expenditure	Expenditure on the acquisition or enhancement of fixed assets, less trade-in values and/or receipts from the sale of replaced or otherwise disposed of items. Capital expenditure does not include expenditure on fixed assets which fall below threshold capitalisation levels, depreciation or costs associated with maintaining, renting or leasing equipment.
Centre based day care	An education and care service other than a family day care service which includes most long day care, preschool and OSHC services that are delivered at a centre.
Children from low-income families	Children in families with gross income (excluding Family Tax Benefit) of less than the annual income threshold for receiving the maximum rate of CCS.
Children from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB)	Children living in situations where the main language spoken at home is not English.
Children with disability	A child that has a need for additional assistance in any of the following areas (learning and applying knowledge, education; communication; mobility; self-care; interpersonal interactions and relationships; other- including general tasks, domestic life, community and social life) compared to children of a similar age, that is related to underlying long term health condition or disability (long term is longer than six months).
Comparability	Data are considered comparable if (subject to caveats) they can be used to inform an assessment of comparative performance. Typically, data are considered comparable when they are collected in the same way and in accordance with the same definitions. For comparable indicators or measures, significant differences in reported results allow an assessment of differences in performance, rather than being the result of anomalies in the data.
Completeness	Data are considered complete if all required data are available for all jurisdictions that provide the service.
Family day care	Services providing small group early childhood education and care services for children in the home environment of a registered carer. Family day care is primarily aimed at 0–5 year olds, but primary school children may also receive the service before and after school, and during school holidays. Staff work in partnership with scheme management and coordination unit staff.
Formal child care	Organised education and care provided by a person other than the child’s parent or guardian, usually outside of the child’s home — includes, long day care, family day care, OSHC, vacation care, occasional care (excluding babysitting), other care and in home care.
Formal qualifications	Early childhood-related teaching degree (three or four years), a child care certificate or associate diploma (two years) and/or other relevant qualifications (for example, a diploma or degree in child care [three years], primary teaching, other teaching, nursing [including mothercraft nursing], psychology and social work).
In home care	Education and care service provided by an approved carer in the child’s home. Families eligible for in home care include those where the parent(s) or child has an illness/disability, those in regional or remote areas, those where the parents are working shift work or non-standard hours, those with multiple births (more than two) and/or more than two children under school age, and those with a breastfeeding mother working from home.

Long day care	<p>Services aimed primarily at 0–5 year olds that are provided in a centre, usually by a mix of qualified and other staff. Educational, care and recreational programs are provided based on the developmental needs, interests and experience of each child. In some jurisdictions, primary school children may also receive care before and after school, and during school vacations. Some long day care centres may also provide preschool and kindergarten services (i.e. a preschool program) and OSHC (see relevant definitions). Long day care services may operate from stand-alone or shared premises, including on school grounds.</p>
National Quality Framework (NQF)	<p>The NQF came into effect from 1 January 2012 and is a national system jointly governed by the Australian Government and State and Territory governments. It aims to raise quality and enable continuous improvement in ECEC through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an applied law system, comprising the <i>Education and Care Services National Law</i> and the Education and Care Services National Regulations • the NQS — which sets a national benchmark for the quality of services in seven key quality areas • an assessment and quality rating process • national approved learning frameworks • a regulatory authority in each state and territory responsible for the approval, monitoring and quality assessment of services in their state or territory • a national body – ACECQA, which guides the implementation of the NQF and works with regulatory authorities (ACECQA 2018).
NQF approved services	<p>Under the NQF, an approved provider must apply for and be granted a service approval for each education and care service it wants to operate. There are two types of approved services under the NQF: Centre-based care services; and Family day care services.</p>
National Quality Standard (NQS) achievement	<p>NQF approved services are rated against the NQS. Under the NQS, a service's overall quality rating is based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 elements, which are assessed as Met or Not Met • 15 standards, which are rated on the four point scale below • Seven quality areas, which are also rated on the four point scale below. <p>Standards, quality areas and the overall quality rating are assessed on a four point scale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceeding NQS • Meeting NQS • Working Towards NQS • Significant Improvement Required. <p>In addition, a provider with a service that has an overall rating of Exceeding NQS, as well as a rating of Exceeding NQS in all seven quality areas, may choose to apply to ACECQA to be assessed for the Excellent rating.</p> <p>The current version of the NQS commenced in all States and Territories on 1 February 2018. Prior to this, a service's overall quality rating was based on 58 elements across 18 standards and seven quality areas.</p>
Non-standard hours of care	<p>Defined by service type as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long day care — service operates before 7 am or after 6.30 pm on any day Monday to Friday or on weekends (to be considered a service offering non-standard hours of care only need to meet 1 of these 3 criteria) • family day care — service operates before 7 am, or after 6.30 pm on any day Monday to Friday or overnight or on weekends (to be considered a service offering non-standard hours of care only need to meet 1 of these 4 criteria) • vacation care — service operates before 7 am or after 6.30 pm on any day Monday to Friday (to be considered a service offering non-standard hours of care only need to meet 1 of these 2 criteria)

Non-standard hours of care (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSHC — service operates before 7 am (before school) or after 6.30 pm (after school) on any day Monday to Friday (to be considered a service offering non-standard hours of care only need to meet 1 of these 2 criteria) • occasional care — service operates before 7 am or after 6.30 pm on any day Monday to Friday or on weekends (to be considered a service offering non-standard hours of care only need to meet 1 of these 3 criteria) • other — service operates before 7 am or after 6.30 pm on any day Monday to Friday or on weekends (to be considered a service offering non-standard hours of care only need to meet 1 of these 3 criteria).
Occasional care	Services usually provided at a centre on an hourly or sessional basis for short periods or at irregular intervals for parents who need time to attend appointments, take care of personal matters, undertake casual and part time employment, study or have temporary respite from full time parenting. These services provide developmental education and care activities for children, and are primarily aimed at 0–5 year olds. Centres providing these services usually employ a mix of qualified and other staff.
Other care	A child care service type in this Report that does not meet any of the other child care service type definitions. It may include services which support children with additional needs or in particular situations (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from NESB, children with disability or of parents with disability, and children living in regional and remote areas). Other care services may include 3 year old preschool (or kindergarten) services (which do not meet the preschool service definition because they are not delivered by a qualified teacher), mobile services, playschools and nannies. Usage of other care services is reported only for State and Territory government funded services (i.e. non-CCS approved services).
Outside school hours care (OSHC)	Services that provide care for school aged children before school, after school, during school holidays, and on pupil free days. OSHC may use stand-alone facilities, share school buildings and grounds and/or share facilities such as community halls.
Preschool program	A preschool program is a structured, play-based learning program, delivered by a qualified teacher, aimed at children in the year or two before they commence full time schooling. This definition of a preschool program is the same for all types of institutions that provide it, for all service settings and includes both government funded and privately provided preschool programs. Preschool programs are often referred to by other terms such as early childhood education, early learning or kindergarten.
Preschool services	Services which deliver a preschool program. The preschool service type can be delivered from a range of service settings. Service settings include stand-alone preschools or kindergartens, preschools attached to a school and other service centres, such as long day care centres.
Primary contact staff	Staff whose primary function is to provide child care and/or preschool services to children.
Real expenditure	Actual expenditure adjusted for changes in prices. Adjustments were made using the General Government Final Consumption Expenditure price deflator and expressed in terms of final year prices.
Recurrent expenditure	Expenditure that does not result in the creation or acquisition of fixed assets (new or second hand). It consists mainly of expenditure on wages, salaries and supplements, purchases of goods and services, and the consumption of fixed capital (depreciation).
Regional and remote areas	Regional and remote areas refer to remoteness areas based on the ABS' Australian Statistical Geography Standard. The criteria for remoteness areas are based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia, which measures the remoteness of a point based on the physical road distance to the nearest urban centre in each of five size classes. Regional areas includes 'inner regional' and 'outer regional' areas. Remote areas includes 'remote' and 'very remote' areas.

Serious incidents	<p>For the purposes of Education and Care Services National Law, the following are prescribed as serious incidents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the death of a child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care service • following an incident occurring while that child was being educated and cared for by an education and care service b. any incident involving serious injury or trauma to a child occurring while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner • for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital; <p>Example: broken limb.</p> c. any incident involving serious illness of a child occurring while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care service for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital <p>Example: Severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis reaction.</p> d. any incident for which emergency services attended e. any circumstance where a child being educated and cared for by an education and care service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for • appears to have been taken or removed from the education and care service premises in a manner that contravenes these Regulations • is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the education and care service premises or any part of the premises.
Service	<p>A service refers to an individual location or establishment providing an ECEC service or services. One service (i.e. location or establishment) may provide more than one ECEC service type, i.e. provide a long day care service and preschool service, or two child care service types.</p>
Service type	<p>Refers to the following categories of ECEC services: long day care; family day care; OSHC; before/after school care; vacation care; occasional care; in home care, and; other care preschool services.</p> <p>All service type categories are considered child care services, except for preschool services.</p>
Special needs group	<p>An identifiable group within the general population who can have special difficulty accessing services. Special needs groups for which data are reported in this section include: children from NESB; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; children from low-income families (CCS approved child care services only); children with disability; and children from regional or remote areas.</p>
Standard hours of care	<p>Defined by service type as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long day care — service opens at 7 am or later and closes at 6.30 pm or earlier every day Monday to Friday (does not operate on weekends) • family day care — service operates at 7 am or later and no later than 6.30 pm every day Monday to Friday (does not operate on weekends or overnight) • vacation care — service operates at 7 am or later and no later than 6.30 pm every day Monday to Friday • OSHC — service opens at 7 am or later (before school) and closes at 6.30 pm or earlier (after school) every day Monday to Friday • occasional care — service operates at 7 am or later and no later than 6.30 pm every day Monday to Friday (does not operate on weekends) • in home care — service operates at 7 am or later and no later than 6.30 pm every day Monday to Friday (does not operate on weekends) <p>Also see non-standard hours of care definition.</p>

State/Territory government (only) funded	State and Territory government financed services — in particular, services that only receive State and Territory government contributions towards providing a specified service (i.e. excluding services which receive Australian Government funding).
Vacation care	Services provided for children enrolled in schools (4–12 year olds) during the school holidays.
Year Before Full time Schooling (YBFS)	<p>Preschool programs delivered to children in the YBFS are intended to be available for a minimum of 600 hours per calendar year (or 15 hours per week for 40 weeks) (as per the NP UAECE). Children aged 3 to 6 years may be enrolled in a preschool program in the YBFS although the programs are typically delivered to 4 and 5 year olds.</p> <p>The state-specific YBFS population is an age range of children specific to each State or Territory. The state specific YBFS definition takes into account the preschool and school age entry provisions of the state or territory in which the child usually resides and the child’s date of birth.</p> <p>YBFS data presented in this Report are not fully comparable with YBFS data prior to 2016, included in previous reports, due to changes in the YBFS methodology.</p> <p>For more information on the state-specific methodology see <i>Preschool Education, Australia</i> (ABS Cat no. 4240.0), appendix 4 (ABS 2020).</p>

3.3 References

- ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2020, *Preschool Education, Australia, 2019*, Cat. no. 4240.0, Canberra.
- ACECQA (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority) 2019, *Guide to the National Quality Framework*, Sydney.
- Huntsman, L. 2008, *Determinants of Quality Child Care: A Review of the Research Evidence*, NSW Department of Community Service, Sydney.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) 2006, *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*, Paris.
- Warren, D. and Haisken-DeNew, J.P. 2013, *Early Bird Catches the Worm: The Causal Impact of Pre-school Participation and Teacher Qualifications in Year 3 NAPLAN Cognitive Tests*, Melbourne Institute, University of Melbourne.