
14 Children's services

Children's services aim to meet the care, education and development needs of children. In this chapter, child care services is the care provided to children aged less than 13 years (that is, aged 0–12 years), usually by someone other than the child's parents or guardian. Preschool services are the services provided to children mainly in the year or two before they begin full time schooling.

The data in this chapter relate to services that are supported by the Australian, State and Territory governments and provided for children aged less than 13 years. Local governments also plan, fund and deliver children's services. Due to data limitations, the only local government data included are where Australian, State and Territory government funding and licensing are involved.

Indigenous data in the children's services chapter

The children's services chapter in the *Report on Government Services 2007* (2007 Report) contains the following data items on Indigenous people:

- representation of Indigenous children in Australian Government approved child care services (compared to their representation in the community), 2006
- representation of Indigenous children enrolled in State and Territory funded or provided preschools (compared to their representation in the community), 2005-06.

The 2007 Report also notes that the Australian Government provides supplementary funding to support the participation of Indigenous children in preschool programs. (2007 Report, p. 14.6). In 2004, an estimated \$12.5 million was provided to education providers for 7729 full time equivalent Indigenous preschool enrolments (DEST unpublished).

Supporting tables

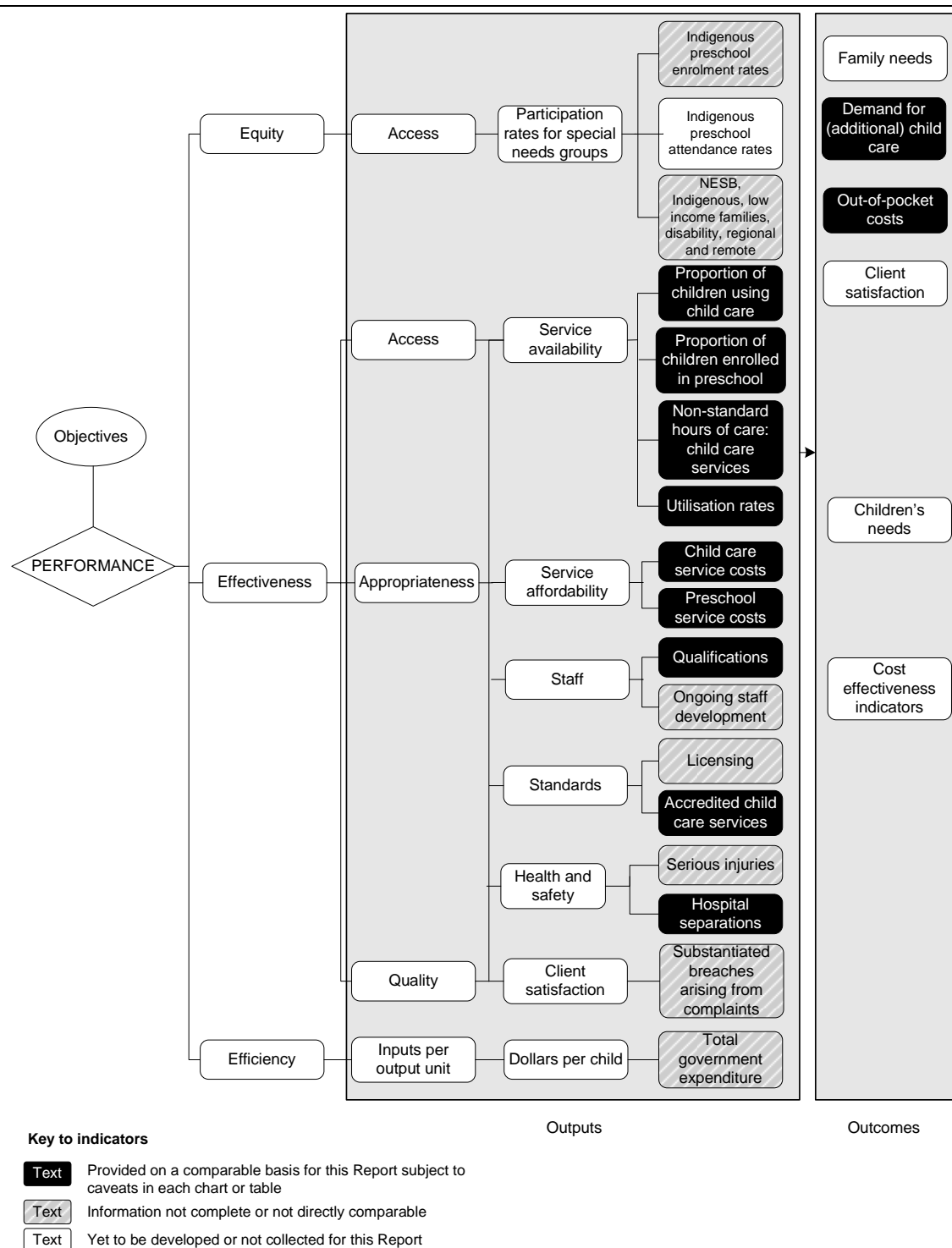
Supporting tables for data within the children's services chapter of this compendium are contained in attachment 14A of the compendium. These tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 14A.3 is table 3 in the children's services attachment). As the data are directly sourced from

the 2007 Report, the compendium also notes where the original table, figure or text in the 2007 Report can be found. For example, where the compendium refers to ‘2007 Report, p. 14.15’ this is page 15 of chapter 14 of the 2007 Report, and ‘2007 Report, table 14A.2’ is attachment table 2 of attachment 14A of the 2007 Report.

Framework of performance indicators

Data for Indigenous people are reported for a subset of the performance indicators for children’s services in the 2007 Report. It is important to interpret these data in the context of the broader performance indicator framework outlined in figure 14.1. The performance indicator framework shows which data are comparable in the 2007 Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, the text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary.

Figure 14.1 Performance indicators for children's services



Source: 2007 Report, figure 14.2, p. 14.10.

Participation rates for special needs groups

‘Participation rates for special needs groups’ is an indicator of equitable access to services (box 14.1).

Box 14.1 Participation rates for special needs groups

Participation rates for special needs groups’ is an output (equity — access) indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that:

- all Australian families have equitable access to child care and preschool services
- there is no discrimination between groups
- there is consideration of the needs of those groups which may have special difficulty accessing services.

This indicator is defined as the proportion of children using child care services who are from targeted special needs groups, compared with the representation of these groups in the community. Data are reported separately for child care and preschool services. Targeted special needs groups include children from a non-English speaking background, children from an Indigenous background, children from low income families, children with a disability, and children from regional and remote areas. ‘Indigenous preschool enrolment rates’ are used as a proxy for ‘Indigenous preschool attendance rates’ (see figure 14.2).

The representation of special needs groups among children’s services users being broadly similar to their representation in the community, may suggest equity of access.

The data indicate that the representation of children in special needs groups among users of Australian Government supported child care is sometimes substantially different across jurisdictions (table 14.1). It is important to note that due to the unavailability of certain data items, the Australian Government data exclude flexible and innovative services, which are targeted towards children from these groups. At a national level, the representation of children from an Indigenous background among child care users was lower (1.7 per cent) than this group’s overall representation in the community (4.6 per cent).

Previous reports have compared the participation of special needs groups in preschool with the representation of these groups in the community, for children aged 0–12 years. While children aged 0–12 years is an appropriate comparator for child care services (as they include Outside School Hours Care), a more appropriate comparator for preschool services is the 3–5 years age group.

Table 14.1 Proportion of children (aged 0–12 years) from special needs groups attending Australian Government approved child care services, 2006 (per cent)

| <i>Representation</i> | <i>NSW</i> | <i>Vic</i> | <i>Qld</i> | <i>WA</i> | <i>SA</i> | <i>Tas</i> | <i>ACT</i> | <i>NT</i> | <i>Aust</i> |
|--|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Children from non-English speaking backgrounds | | | | | | | | | |
| In child care services | 16.5 | 12.5 | 5.1 | 6.4 | 7.9 | 2.6 | 9.5 | 9.1 | 10.7 |
| In the community ^a | 15.0 | 14.2 | 4.9 | 7.2 | 7.5 | 1.7 | 9.5 | 25.3 | 11.2 |
| Indigenous children | | | | | | | | | |
| In child care services ^b | 1.5 | 0.7 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 11.3 | 1.7 |
| In the community ^c | 4.2 | 1.1 | 6.6 | 6.6 | 3.5 | 7.1 | 2.6 | 40.9 | 4.6 |
| Children from low-income families | | | | | | | | | |
| In child care services ^d | 25.0 | 26.6 | 28.3 | 27.3 | 29.0 | 29.2 | 10.6 | 17.2 | 26.4 |
| In the community ^e | 28.6 | 27.0 | 29.6 | 31.4 | 29.0 | 38.8 | 12.1 | 30.6 | 28.7 |
| Children with a disability | | | | | | | | | |
| In child care services | 3.2 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 2.5 | 3.8 | 2.3 | 1.9 | 4.2 | 2.7 |
| In the community ^f | 8.0 | 6.8 | 7.6 | 8.9 | 8.8 | 6.2 | 7.5 | np | 7.7 |
| Children from regional areas | | | | | | | | | |
| In child care services ^b | 25.4 | 25.7 | 36.2 | 19.3 | 18.3 | 99.4 | 0.1 | 79.3 | 29.0 |
| In the community ^g | 28.9 | 28.4 | 45.2 | 24.5 | 26.8 | 97.8 | 0.2 | 49.5 | 33.0 |
| Children from remote areas | | | | | | | | | |
| In child care services ^b | 0.2 | – | 1.2 | 3.6 | 1.9 | 0.6 | .. | 20.7 | 1.0 |
| In the community ^h | 0.8 | 0.1 | 4.5 | 8.7 | 4.6 | 2.2 | .. | 50.5 | 3.1 |

^a Data relate to children aged 0–12 years at June 2001, who spoke a language other than English at home, and were obtained from the ABS 2001 *Census of Population and Housing*. ^b These numbers do not include innovative or flexible services that receive direct funding from the Australian Government and are targeted towards children from these groups. ^c Data relate to children aged 0–12 years at June 2005 and were obtained from ABS *Experimental Indigenous population projections*, low series. ^d Data relate to children in child care services from families with a gross annual household income of less than \$33 361 (the cut-off point for receiving the maximum amount of child care benefits as at May 2006). ^e Data relate to children aged 0–12 years from families with a gross annual parental income of less than \$31 755. The Family Tax Benefit and the one-off payment to families, officially referred to as "Family Assistance Legislative Amendment (More help for families — 'One-off' payments)", have been excluded from the calculation of parental income. The data were obtained from the ABS 2003–04 *Survey of Household Income and Housing*. ^f Data are estimated from the ABS 2003 *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers* and relate to children aged 0–12 years. Due to the small sample size, data for NT are not published. ^g Data relate to children aged 0–12 years at June 2005 and were obtained from the ABS *Estimated resident population by Remoteness Area*. The data include Inner Regional Australia and Outer Regional Australia. Caution should be exercised with small proportions, as they are generally less reliable than larger proportions. ^h Data relate to children aged 0–12 years at June 2005 and were obtained from the ABS *Estimated resident population by Remoteness Area*. The data include Remote Australia and Very Remote Australia. Caution should be exercised with small proportions, as they are generally less reliable than larger proportions. .. Not applicable – Nil or rounded to zero. np Not published.

Source: AGCCCS (unpublished); ABS 2001 *Census of Population and Housing* (unpublished); ABS *Experimental Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 1991 to 2009* (Cat. no. 3238.0); ABS 2003–04 *Survey of Household Income and Housing* (unpublished); ABS 2003 *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers* (unpublished); ABS *Estimated Resident Population Collection* (unpublished); table 14A.1; 2007 Report, table 14.2, p. 14.13.

In this report, data on the representation of special needs groups for children aged 3–5 years in government funded preschools are provided in table 14.2. The data

provide a broad indication of the relative access to preschool for special needs groups. Data on representation of special needs groups in State and Territory child care and preschools, for children aged 0–12 years, can be found in tables 14A.2–14A.9.

Nationally, the proportion of preschool attendees in 2005-06 who were from special needs groups were generally similar to their representation in the community, though some groups are over represented in some jurisdictions and under represented in others.

Table 14.2 Proportion of children (aged 3–5 years) from special needs groups attending State and Territory funded or provided preschools, 2005-06 (per cent)

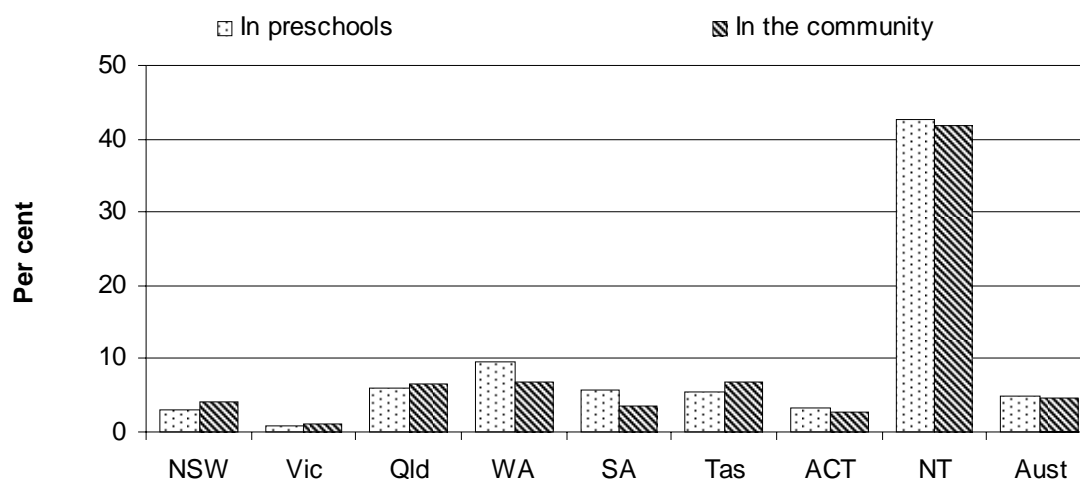
| <i>Representation</i> | <i>NSW</i> | <i>Vic</i> | <i>Qld</i> | <i>WA</i> | <i>SA</i> | <i>Tas</i> | <i>ACT</i> | <i>NT</i> | <i>Aust</i> |
|--|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Children from non-English speaking backgrounds | | | | | | | | | |
| In preschool services | 8.2 | 13.3 | 2.8 | na | 9.4 | na | 15.1 | na | 7.0 |
| In the community ^a | 16.6 | 15.6 | 5.3 | 7.6 | 8.1 | 1.7 | 10.2 | 27.0 | 12.3 |
| Indigenous children | | | | | | | | | |
| In preschool services ^b | 3.1 | 0.9 | 6.1 | 9.6 | 5.7 | 5.5 | 3.4 | 42.5 | 4.9 |
| In the community ^c | 4.2 | 1.1 | 6.6 | 6.7 | 3.6 | 6.9 | 2.7 | 41.8 | 4.7 |
| Children with a disability | | | | | | | | | |
| In preschool services ^d | 6.5 | 10.2 | 2.0 | 2.8 | 15.4 | na | 4.3 | 8.4 | 6.4 |
| In the community ^e | 7.7 | 6.5 | 8.6 | 10.2 | 8.3 | 7.2 | 14.3 | np | 8.0 |
| Children from regional areas | | | | | | | | | |
| In preschool services ^b | 32.6 | 31.7 | 50.7 | 23.3 | 29.3 | 98.2 | 0.2 | 45.2 | 37.2 |
| In the community ^f | 28.3 | 27.8 | 44.6 | 24.5 | 26.5 | 97.5 | 0.2 | 49.2 | 32.5 |
| Children from remote areas | | | | | | | | | |
| In preschool services ^b | 1.2 | 0.2 | 8.2 | 9.8 | 5.8 | 1.8 | .. | 54.8 | 4.8 |
| In the community ^g | 0.9 | 0.1 | 4.8 | 9.1 | 4.6 | 2.5 | .. | 50.8 | 3.3 |

^a Data relate to children aged 3–5 years at June 2001, who spoke a language other than English at home, and were obtained from the ABS 2001 *Census of Population and Housing*. ^b These numbers do not include innovative or flexible services that receive direct funding from the Australian Government and are targeted towards children from these groups. ^c Data relate to children aged 3–5 years at June 2005 and were obtained from ABS *Experimental Indigenous population projections*, low series. ^d Data are not directly comparable between jurisdictions because there is no national definition or standard on children with a disability. ^e Data are estimated from the ABS 2003 *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers* and relate to children aged 3-5 years. Due to the small sample size, data for the NT are not published. ^f Data relate to children aged 3–5 years at June 2005 and were obtained from the ABS *Estimated resident population by Remoteness Area*. The data include Inner Regional Australia and Outer Regional Australia. Caution should be exercised with small proportions, as they are generally less reliable than larger proportions. ^g Data relate to children aged 3-5 years at June 2005 and were obtained from the ABS *Estimated resident population by Remoteness Area*. The data include Remote Australia and Very Remote Australia. Caution should be exercised with small proportions, as they are generally less reliable than larger proportions. .. Not applicable. na Not available. – Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); ABS 2001 *Census of Population and Housing* (unpublished); ABS *Experimental Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 1991 to 2009* (Cat. no. 3238.0); ABS 2003 *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers* (unpublished); ABS *Estimated Resident Population Collection* (unpublished); 2007 Report, table 14.3, p. 14.15.

Nationally, the proportion of preschool enrolments from Indigenous backgrounds (4.9 per cent) largely reflects the proportion of the population from Indigenous backgrounds (4.7 per cent) (figure 14.2).

Figure 14.2 **Proportion of preschool enrolments of Indigenous children, 2005-06^{a, b, c}**



^a Data relate to children aged 3–5 years at June 2005 and were obtained from ABS *Experimental Indigenous population projections*, low series. ^b Data for the representation in preschool services are from State and Territory enrolment data. ^c All Indigenous data relate to people who self-identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Source: ABS *Experimental Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 1991 to 2009* (Cat. no. 3238.0); State and Territory governments (unpublished); 2007 Report, figure 14.3, p. 14.16.

Future directions in performance reporting

The Review will continue to improve the appropriateness and completeness of the performance indicator framework. Future work will focus on developing an access indicator for Indigenous preschool attendance.

Supporting tables

Supporting tables for data within this chapter are contained in the attachment to the compendium. These tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 14A.3 is table 3 in the children's services attachment). The tables included in the attachment are listed below.

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Table 14A.1 | Representation of special needs groups in attendees at Australian Government approved child care services (per cent) |
| Table 14A.2 | Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, New South Wales |
| Table 14A.3 | Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Victoria |
| Table 14A.4 | Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Queensland |
| Table 14A.5 | Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Western Australia |
| Table 14A.6 | Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, South Australia |
| Table 14A.7 | Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Tasmania |
| Table 14A.8 | Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Australian Capital Territory |
| Table 14A.9 | Service availability during non-standard hours and participation by target groups, Northern Territory |