
A Early childhood, education and training preface

CONTENTS

Measuring the performance of the sector	21
Indigenous Australians and ECET	21
Cross-cutting issues	28
Special needs groups	28
Attachment tables	30
References	30

Attachment tables

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

Education is a life-long activity, beginning with learning and development in the home through to more formal settings — including child care, preschool and the three sectors that comprise Australia's education and training system (the school education, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education sectors).

The following chapters of this Report cover child care (including outside school hours care) and preschools (chapter 3), school education (chapter 4), and VET (chapter 5). References are made to associated information contained in other parts of this Report, such as chapters and related attachment tables.

Areas of government involvement in early childhood, education and training (ECET) that are not covered in this Report include:

- universities (although some information is included in this Preface where necessary to provide a complete picture)
- income support payments for students
- adult community education (except VET programs)
- VET activity delivered on a fee-for-service basis by private and community education providers.

Australia's ECET sector has a range of objectives, some of which are common across all sector components (for example, to increase knowledge and equip students with the skills for life long learning) while others are more specific to a particular sector.

- The objectives of children's services are to meet the care and education needs of all children in developmentally appropriate ways, in a safe and nurturing environment, to provide support for families in caring for their children, and to provide these services across a range of settings in an equitable and efficient manner (2010 Report, box 3.3). Children's services have both education and care objectives and the Children's services chapter presents both of these.
- The objectives of school education services, as reflected in the national goals for schooling (2010 Report, box 4.1) (and consistent with the *National Education Agreement*) focus on improving educational outcomes for all young Australians which is central to the nation's social and economic prosperity, and positioning young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives.
- The objectives of VET services, as reflected in the *National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development* (2010 Report, box 5.3) are to ensure all working age Australians have the opportunity to develop the skills and qualifications needed, including through a responsive training system, to enable them to be effective participants in and contributors to the modern labour market. VET services also aim to assist individuals to overcome barriers to education, training and employment, and to be motivated to acquire and utilise new skills, to ensure Australian industry and businesses develop, harness and utilise the skills and abilities of the workforce, and to provide opportunities for Indigenous Australians to acquire skills to access viable employment.
- The objectives of higher education services, as reflected in the *Commonwealth Higher Education Support Act 2003*, include contributing to the development of cultural and intellectual life in Australia, and appropriately meeting Australia's social and economic needs for a highly educated and skilled population.

Australian governments view early childhood development, education and training as key means to improve economic and social outcomes, as well as to improve the equity of outcomes in society. The link between early childhood development and achievement at school is well established, as is the link between education and skills and workforce participation and productivity. Research indicates that early childhood, education, skills and workforce development policies could increase workforce participation by 0.7 percentage points, and productivity by up to 1.2 per cent by 2030 (PC 2006).

Measuring the performance of the sector

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed six National Agreements to enhance accountability to the public for the outcomes achieved or outputs delivered by a range of government services, (see 2010 Report, chapter 1 for more detail on reforms to federal financial relations). The *National Education Agreement* (NEA) and *National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development* (NASWD) cover the area of ECET, and education and training indicators in the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* (NIRA) establish specific outcomes for reducing the level of disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. The agreements include sets of performance indicators, for which the Steering Committee collates annual performance information for analysis by the COAG Reform Council (CRC). The performance indicator results reported in this preface have been revised to align with the performance indicators in the National Agreements. The Future directions section of this preface identifies possible future reporting on performance indicators from COAG National Partnership agreements.

Individual performance indicator frameworks for the children's services, school education and VET sectors have been developed for the Report (figures 3.1, 4.1 and 5.1 in the respective chapters). There is significant interaction between children's services (particularly preschool) and school education, between school education and VET, and between schools/VET and the university sector. Outcomes are also related to socioeconomic factors, geographic location, age, Indigenous status, language background and the performance of other government agencies (particularly in the areas of health, housing and community services).

Indigenous Australians and ECET

The particular needs of Indigenous Australians for services in the ECET sector was reflected in the endorsement of Indigenous-specific targets by COAG in 2008 (COAG 2008) and in the NIRA. COAG targets include increasing access to quality early childhood education for 4 year olds in remote communities, reducing the gap

in literacy skills for school-age children, and increasing year 12 (or equivalent) attainment. A range of indicators in this Preface report on the performance of education and training services in relation to Indigenous people.

Selected equity and effectiveness indicators

Participation in child care

Indigenous children's participation in Australian Government approved child care services is presented in tables 3A.2 and 3A.3. Nationally in 2009, 2.2 per cent of Indigenous children aged 0–5 years and 2.8 per cent of Indigenous children aged 6–12 years participated in Australian Government approved child care services (table 3A.2).

Participation in preschool

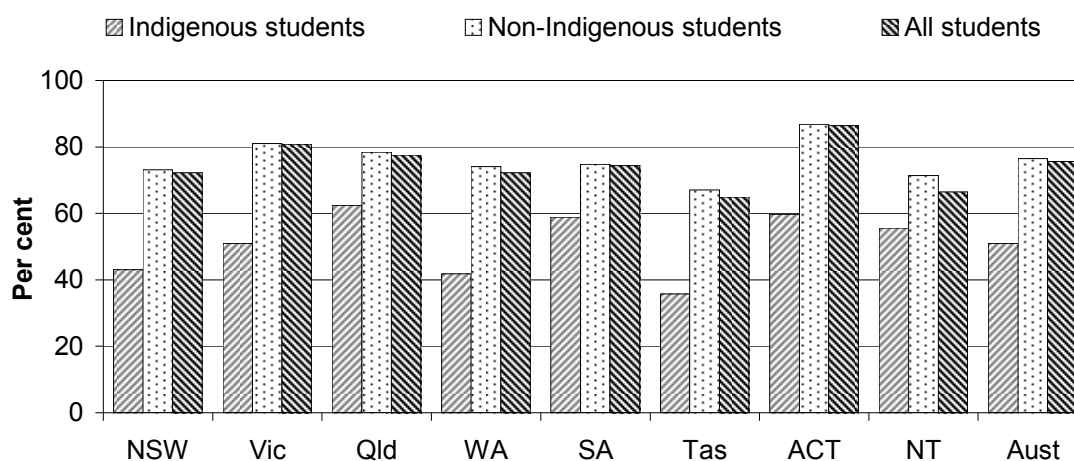
Indigenous children's participation in preschool is presented in table 3A.4. Nationally, the representation of Indigenous children in preschools was a similar proportion (4.9 per cent) to their representation in the community (4.4 per cent) (table 3A.4).

The *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2006* reported that nationally, the proportion of Indigenous students in government preschools who were assessed as being literacy ready to start school was similar in 2002 (64.9 per cent) and 2006 (65.3 per cent in 2006), and the proportion assessed as numeracy ready increased from 64.4 per cent in 2002 to 67.7 per cent in 2006 (DEEWR 2008). However, the disparity in academic performance between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students increases as students progress through school (SCRGSP 2009, p. 4.46). Research has shown that achievement in years 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy is a key determinant of whether students continue to year 12 and enter into higher education (ACER 2004).

Participation in school education and VET

Nationally, the apparent retention rate of full time Indigenous students from year 10 to year 12 was 51.0 per cent in 2008, compared with 75.6 per cent for full time all students (figure EP.1). Indigenous students who leave school before year 10 are not included in the base year for retention from year 10 to year 12. Nationally, 10.8 per cent of Indigenous students left school before year 10 — compared to 0.7 per cent of all students — so are not included in the base year for retention from year 10 to year 12 (table 4A.44).

Figure EP.1 **Apparent retention rates from year 10 to year 12, full time secondary students, 2008^{a, b, c, d}**



^a Apparent retention rates are affected by factors that vary across jurisdictions. For this reason, variations in apparent retention rates over time within jurisdictions may be more useful than comparisons across jurisdictions. ^b The exclusion of part time students from standard apparent retention rate calculations has implications for the interpretation of results for all jurisdictions, but particularly for SA, Tasmania and the NT where there are high proportions of part time students in government schools (table 4.4 in 2010 Report, chapter 4). ^c Ungraded students are not included in the calculation of apparent retention rates. ^d Some students' Indigenous status is not stated. Students for whom Indigenous status is not stated are not included in the data for 'Non-Indigenous students', but are included in the data for 'All students'. Consequently, the number of Indigenous students counted in the Indigenous rates may be under-represented in some jurisdictions.

Source: ABS 2009, *Schools Australia 2008*, Cat. No. 4221.0; table 4A.44; 2010 Report, figure B.8, p. B.17.

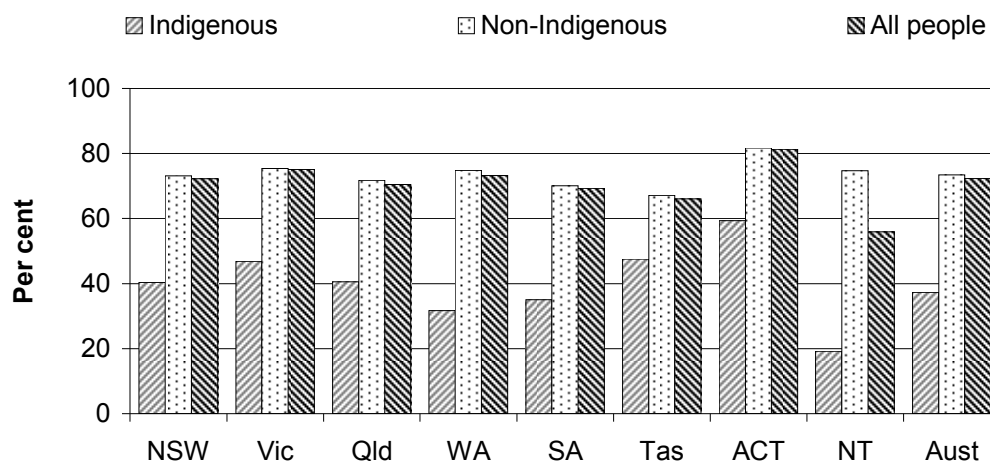
In 2006, 32 per cent of the year 12 Indigenous student cohort undertook a senior secondary certificate course aimed at gaining university entrance, compared to 78 per cent of the non-Indigenous student cohort. Of these Indigenous students, 11 per cent attained a score that would gain them university entrance, compared to 47 per cent of non-Indigenous students (DEEWR 2008).

Nationally in 2007, Indigenous students comprised 3.2 per cent of students participating in VET in Schools (NCVER 2009). Indigenous students made up a higher proportion of VET students than their proportion in the population (table 5A.2).

Participation in full time employment, education or training

Nationally in 2006, non-Indigenous 18–24 year olds were more likely than Indigenous 18–24 year olds to be engaged in full time employment, education or training (73.4 per cent and 37.3 per cent respectively) (figure EP.2). Data for other age groups are presented in table EPA.1.

Figure EP.2 Proportion of 18–24 year olds engaged in full time employment, education or training, by Indigenous status, 2006^{a, b, c, d, e}



^a Full time participation is defined as participation in full time employment, full time education or training, or a combination of both part time employment and part time education or training. ^b Australia includes 'Other Territories'. ^c All people aged 18–24 years excludes people whose fully engaged employment or education status was unknown. ^d All people includes those for whom Indigenous status is unknown. ^e Proportions are determined using the number of students educated in the jurisdiction divided by the estimated resident population for the jurisdiction in the 15–19 years age group. In some cases students are educated in a different jurisdiction to their place of residence. These students are counted in their jurisdiction of education for the numerator (number of students educated in the jurisdiction) and their jurisdiction of residence for the denominator (estimated resident population).

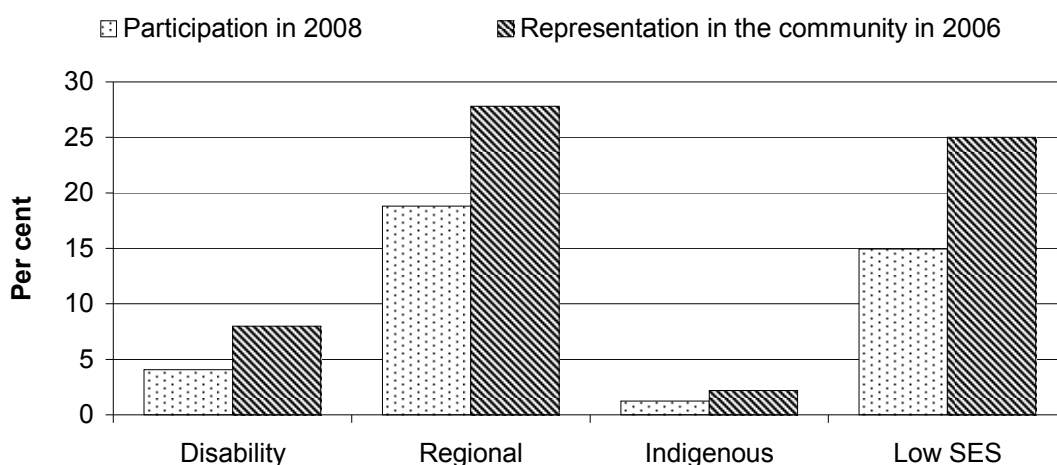
Source: ABS (unpublished) 2006 Census of Population and Housing; table EPA.1; 2010 Report, figure B.12, p. B.21.

Participation in higher education

While most young people make successful transitions from school to higher education, some do not. Research shows that students from groups that are less likely to complete year 12 are also those less likely to participate in higher education, and particularly those that show low levels of early school achievement (ACER 2003).

In higher education, there is an under-representation (compared to the proportion of the relative group in the community) among people from regional areas of Australia, people with a disability, those with disadvantaged/low socioeconomic backgrounds and Indigenous Australians (figure EP.3).

Figure EP.3 **Higher education participation by selected groups, Australia^{a, b}**



^a Students can be included in more than one selected group. ^b Regional includes regional, remote, rural and isolated areas.

Source: DEEWR (2009 and unpublished) *Higher Education Student Statistics, 2008*; table EPA.5; 2010 Report, figure B.13, p. B.22.

Selected outcome indicators

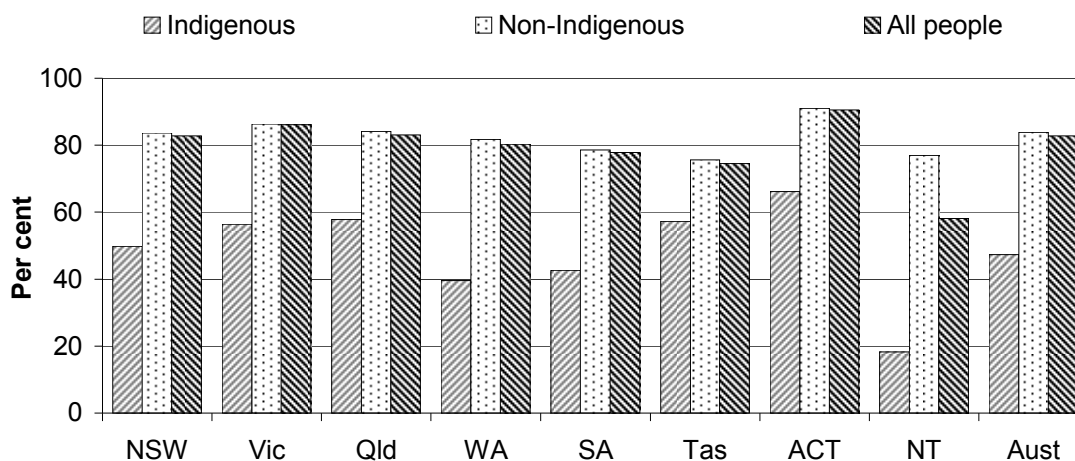
Educational attainment

An important objective of the education system is to add to the skill base of the population, with the benefits of improving employment, worker productivity and economic growth. Educational attainment of the labour force is used as a proxy indicator for the stock of skills. However, it understates the skill base because it does not capture skills acquired through partially completed courses, courses not leading to a formal qualification, or training and experience gained at work.

Minimum attainment — Year 12 or equivalent, or Certificate II

Nationally in 2006, non-Indigenous 20–24 year olds were more likely than Indigenous 20–24 year olds to have completed year 12 or equivalent, or gained a qualification at certificate II or above (83.8 per cent and 47.4 per cent respectively) (figure EP.4). Data for 19 year olds and 25–64 year olds are presented in table EPA.2.

Figure EP.4 Proportion of 20–24 year olds who completed year 12 or equivalent, or gained a qualification at certificate level II or above, by Indigenous status, 2006^{a, b, c, d}



^a Australia includes 'Other Territories'. ^b People aged 20–24 years who have completed year 12 or certificate II or above includes certificate I or II nfd but excludes people with a certificate nfd and people whose level of non-school qualification could not be determined. ^c All people include those for whom Indigenous status is unknown and consequently the proportion of Indigenous students may be under-represented in some jurisdictions. ^d Proportions are determined using the number of students educated in the jurisdiction divided by the estimated resident population for the jurisdiction in the 15–19 years age group. In some cases students are educated in a different jurisdiction to their place of residence. These students are counted in their jurisdiction of education for the numerator (number of students educated in the jurisdiction) and their jurisdiction of residence for the denominator (estimated resident population).

Source: ABS (unpublished) 2006 Census of Population and Housing; table EPA.2; 2010 Report, figure B.21, p. B.30.

People with limited or no qualifications

Indigenous 20–64 year olds were more likely to be without qualifications at or above a certificate III than non-Indigenous 20–64 year olds (76.0 per cent and 50.3 per cent respectively) (figure EP.5).

Figure EP.5 Proportion of 20–64 year olds without qualifications at or above certificate III, by Indigenous status, 2006^{a, b, c}



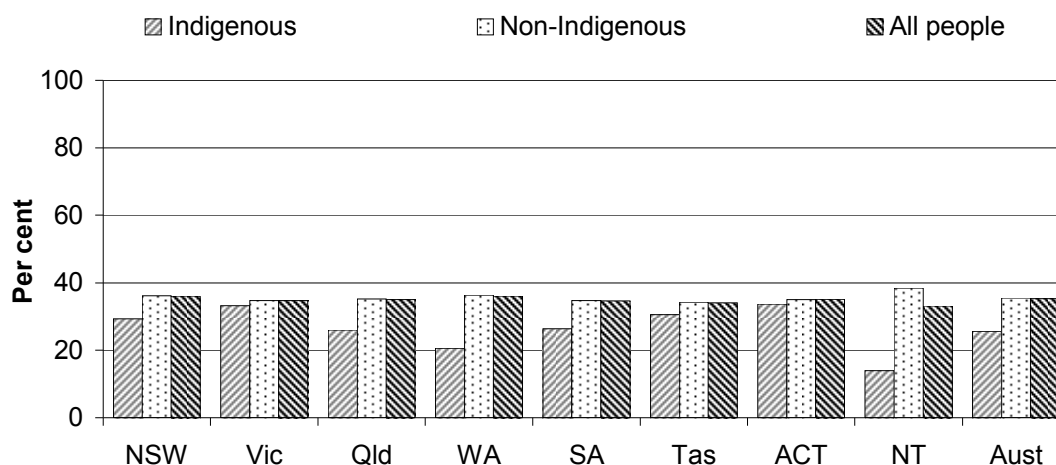
^a Certificate III or above includes certificate III, IV, diploma, advanced diploma, bachelor degree and above. Based on ABS decision tree for determination of level of highest education attainment. ^b All people excludes people whose level of education was not stated. ^c All people include those for whom Indigenous status is unknown and consequently the proportion of Indigenous students may be under-represented in some jurisdictions.

Source: ABS (unpublished) 2006 Census of Population and Housing; table EPA.3; 2010 Report, figure B.22, p. B.31.

People with or working towards selected VET qualifications

Nationally in 2006, 35.3 per cent of 20–64 year olds had, or were working towards, a post school qualification at a certificate III, IV, diploma or advanced diploma level. Non-Indigenous 20–64 year olds were more likely than Indigenous 20–64 year olds to have, or be working towards, a certificate III, IV, diploma or advanced diploma (35.5 per cent and 25.6 per cent respectively) (figure EP.6).

Figure EP.6 Proportion of 20–64 year old population with or working towards post school qualification in certificate III, IV, diploma and advanced diploma, by Indigenous status, 2006^{a, b, c, d}



^a Australia includes Other Territories. ^b Includes people who have indicated that they have attained one of these qualifications, or are working towards a post school qualification. The Census does not enable disaggregation by qualification type, therefore this figure is an overcount of the required population. ^c All people excludes people whose level of education or attendance status was not stated. ^d All people include those for whom Indigenous status is unknown and consequently the proportion of Indigenous students may be under-represented in some jurisdictions.

Source: ABS (unpublished) 2006 Census of Population and Housing; table EPA.4; 2010 Report, figure B.23, p. B.32.

Cross-cutting issues

The link between early childhood development and achievement at school is well established, as is the link between education, skills, workforce participation and productivity. Information in the earlier sections of this preface has pointed to some of these relationships.

Special needs groups

The ECET chapters report various data in relation to Indigenous populations as well as other special needs groups such as people with a disability, people living in remote areas, people with a language background other than English, and people from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds (table EP.1). (This compendium only includes those data relating specifically to Indigenous people.)

Table EP.1 Some data reported on special needs groups in ECET chapters

	<i>Children's services (chapter 3)</i>	<i>School education (chapter 4)</i>	<i>VET (chapter 5)</i>
Indigenous people	✓	✓	✓
People with a disability	✓	✓	✓
People in remote areas	✓	✓	✓
People with a language background other than English	✓	✓	✓
People from low SES backgrounds	✓	✓	✓

Source: 2010 Report, table B.1, p. B.39.

Special needs groups are not discrete, with some individuals belonging to more than one of these groups. For example, there is a greater incidence of low socioeconomic status and particular types of disability amongst Indigenous people compared with the general population (ABS unpublished, *2006 Census of Population and Housing*). People with a severe disability are often disadvantaged in terms of workforce participation (ABS 2004), which may lead to lower socioeconomic status.

Attachment tables

Attachment tables for data within this preface are contained in the attachment to the Compendium. These tables are identified in references throughout this preface by an 'A' suffix (for example, table EPA.1 is table 1 in the Early childhood, education and training attachment). Attachment tables are on the Review website (www.pc.gov.au/gsp). Users without access to the website can contact the Secretariat to obtain the attachment tables (see contact details on the inside front cover of the Compendium). The tables included in the attachment are listed below.

- Table EPA.1** Full time participation in employment, education or training, by Indigenous status (per cent), 2006
- Table EPA.2** Proportion of people who have completed year 12 or equivalent or gained a qualification at certificate level II or above, by Indigenous status, 2006
- Table EPA.3** Proportion of 20–64 year old population who do not have qualifications at or above certificate III, by Indigenous status, 2006
- Table EPA.4** Proportion of 20–64 year old population with or working towards post school qualification in certificate III, IV, diploma and advanced diploma, by Indigenous status, 2006
- Table EPA.5** Higher education participation by selected groups

References

- ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2004, *Disability, Ageing and Carers 2003*, Cat. no. 4430.0, Canberra.
- ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research) 2003 *Entering Higher Education in Australia*, LSAY Briefing Number 6, January 2003, Melbourne.
- 2004, *What do we know about the experiences of Australian Youth?*, Melbourne.
- COAG (Council of Australian Governments) 2008, *Productivity Agenda Working Group — Education, Skills, Training and Early Childhood Development: outcomes, progress measures and policy directions 12 March 2008*, Canberra, <http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/85499B3A-E77F-4A55-9735-F8CD853EB072/0/Comminque.pdf> (accessed 12 October 2008).
- DEEWR (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations) 2008, *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2006*, Canberra.
- NCVER (National Centre for Vocational Education Research) 2009, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: VET in Schools 2007*, Adelaide.

PC (Productivity Commission) 2006, *Potential Benefits of the National Reform Agenda*, Report to the Council of Australian Governments, Canberra.

SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2009, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2009*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.