
Report on Government Services 2021

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F Community services

Impact of COVID-19 on data for the Community services sector

COVID-19 may affect data in this Report in a number of ways. This includes in respect of actual performance (that is, the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery in 2020 which is reflected in the data results), and the collection and processing of data (that is, the ability of data providers to undertake data collection and process results for inclusion in the Report).

Social distancing restrictions introduced in March 2020 are likely to have had an impact on the community services sector. Any impacts which are specific to the service areas covered in this Report are noted in sections 14, 15, 16 and 17. For the community services sector, other than aged care (section 14), there are no significant changes to the data as a result of COVID-19. In section 14 there is some impact on data relating to the measurement of compliance with aged care quality standards.

Main aims of services within the sector

Community services provide support to sustain and nurture the functioning of individuals, families and groups, to maximise their potential and to enhance community wellbeing.

Services included in the sector

There is no nationally agreed definition of 'community service purpose', and community services often overlap with other sectors such as health and housing/homelessness. Services listed below are those most commonly identified as community services by government:

- [Aged care services](#) >
- [Services for people with disability](#) >
- [Child protection services](#) >
- [Youth justice services](#) >

Detailed information on the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of service provision and the achievement of outcomes for the aged care, disability, child protection and youth justice service areas is contained in the service-specific sections.

Government expenditure in the sector

Total Australian, State and Territory government recurrent expenditure on community services was estimated to be \$48.1 billion in 2019-20, around 17.4 per cent of total government expenditure on services covered in this Report. Aged care was the largest contributor (\$21.5 billion, table 14A.3), followed by expenditure on services provided under the National Disability Agreement and

government contributions to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (\$18.7 billion, table 15A.3), child protection services (\$6.9 billion, table 16A.8) and youth justice services (\$1.0 billion, table 17A.9).

Flows in the sector

The community services sector is diverse. It comprises services delivered by a variety of government and non-government providers in a range of service settings with people accessing these services through many different pathways. People with disability may need aged care services earlier than those without, and aged care services need to cater for aged people with disability. These two services also have a key interface issue with the age of the person at first contact with the service determining access (a person with disability aged under 65 years or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged under 50 years may have access to disability services, but a person with disability aged 65 years or over and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years or over will only have access to disability services if they were approved for the service before turning 65 years old or 50 years old for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; otherwise they will need to access support services through the aged care system). Additionally, child protection and youth justice services also have interface issues¹, although understanding of these processes is still being developed.

The role of informal carers across Australia

Carers play a vital role in supporting people, in need of assistance with core activities of mobility, self-care and communication, to remain in the community. Although some care is provided by formal providers, it is often undertaken informally by friends and family. Carers enable older people to remain in their homes and support people with disability and long term health conditions to remain in the community. In 2018, 861 600 people (3.5 per cent of the Australian population) were primary carers² of people with disability or older people³. Section 15 includes further information on carers of people with disability. A report by the Productivity Commission on behalf of the Steering Committee investigated what works to [support informal carers of the elderly with dementia](#) to prevent/delay entry to residential aged care (SCRGSP 2018)⁴.

Footnotes

1. Malvaso C G, Delfabbro P. H, Day D, 2017, 'The child protection and juvenile justice nexus in Australia: A longitudinal examination of the relationship between maltreatment and offending', *Child Abuse and Neglect* , Vol 64, February 2017, pp. 32-46.
2. See sub-section 15.4 for the definition of primary carer.
3. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2019, *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018* ; table 29.1; Cat. No. 44300DO30_2018.
4. SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2018, *Interventions to Support Carers of People with Dementia* , Productivity Commission, Canberra.