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## 3 Children's services

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#### **Attachment tables**

Attachment tables are identified in references throughout this Indigenous Compendium by an 'A' suffix (for example, in this chapter, table 3A.3). As the data are directly sourced from the 2011 Report, the Compendium also notes where the original table, figure or text in the 2011 Report can be found. For example, where the Compendium refers to '2011 Report, p. 3.15' this is page 15 of chapter 3 of the 2011 Report, and '2011 Report, table 3A.2' is attachment table 2 of attachment 3A of the 2011 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](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp).

The Children's services chapter (chapter 3) in the *Report on Government Services 2011* (2011 Report) reports on the performance of Children's services in each Australian state and territory. Data are reported for Indigenous people for a subset of the performance indicators reported in that chapter — those data are compiled and presented here.

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Children's services aim to meet the care, education and development needs of children. In this chapter, child care services are those provided to children aged 0–12 years, usually by someone other than the child's parents or guardian. Preschool services are services provided to children mainly in the year or two before they begin full time schooling. This chapter is included in the 'Early childhood, education and training' section of the Report because of the important links between children's services and education.

Most of the data in this chapter relate to services that are supported by the Australian, State and Territory governments and provided for children aged 0–12 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/or licensing are involved.

### **Indigenous data in the Children's services chapter**

The Children's services chapter in the 2011 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), 2009 10
- representation of Indigenous children in State and Territory Government child care and preschools (compared to their representation in the community), 2009 10
- Indigenous children enrolled in State and Territory Government preschool services, 2005-06 to 2009-10
- children absent from non-government preschools, 2009.

The arrangements for departmental responsibility for early childhood education and care vary across State and Territory governments. There are also differences across states and territories for early childhood education program names and starting ages. To provide some clarity on these arrangements, a matrix showing basic information on child care and preschool education programs, such as agency responsibility, program names and starting ages, has been included in attachment table 3A.1.

The Australian Government provides supplementary funding to support the participation of Indigenous children in preschool programs. In 2010, an estimated \$11.9 million was provided on a per person and project basis to 1469 preschools. The funding covers 8885 full time equivalent Indigenous preschool enrolments (DEEWR unpublished).

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## Framework of performance indicators

The Children's services performance indicator framework outlined in figure 3.1 identifies the principal children's services activity areas considered in the 2011 Report. Data for Indigenous people are reported for a subset of the performance indicators and are presented here. It is important to interpret these data in the context of the broader performance indicator framework. The framework shows which data are comparable. For data that are not considered directly comparable, the text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary.

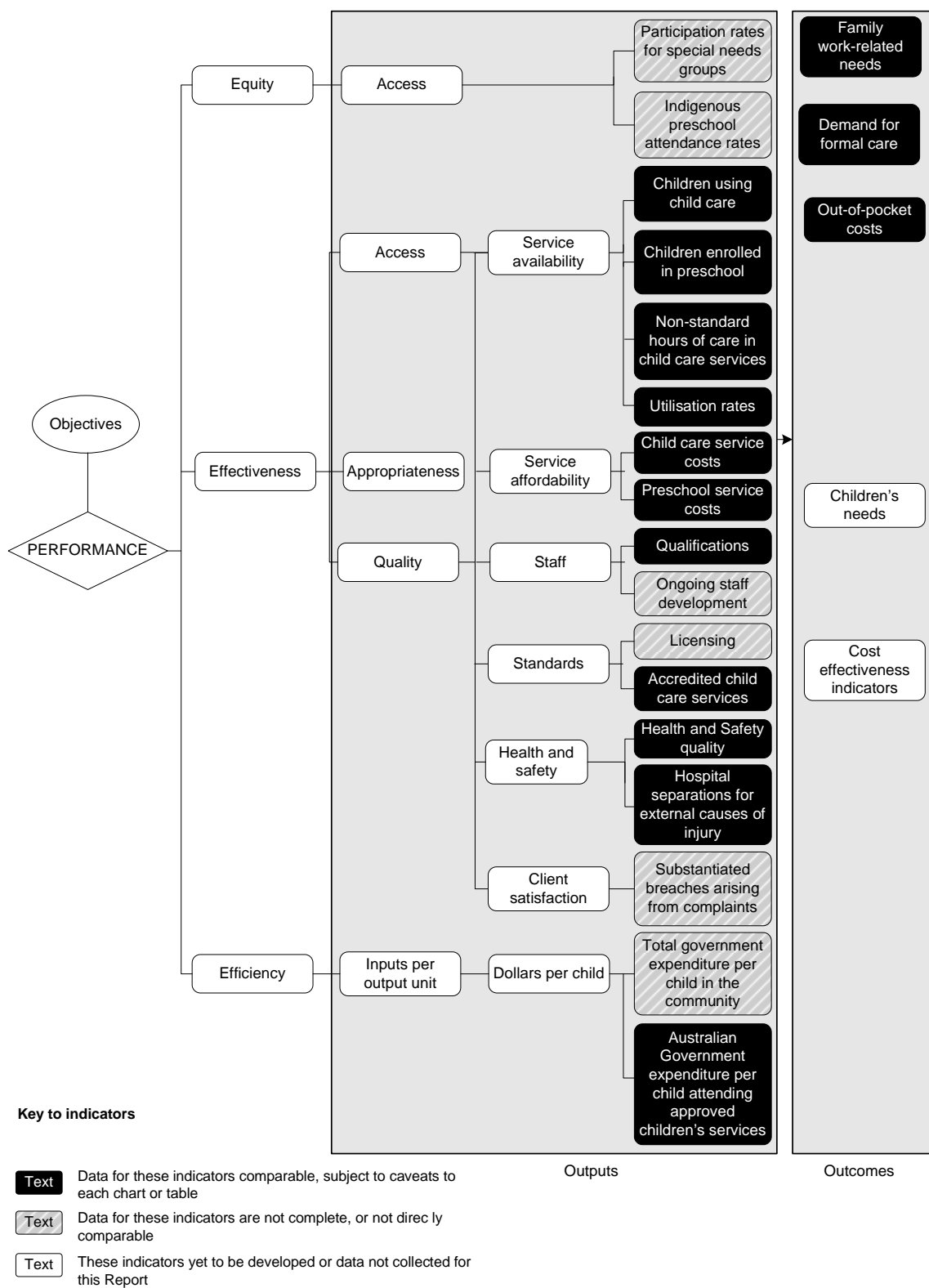
Indicator boxes presented throughout the chapter provide information about the reported indicators. As these are sourced directly from the 2011 Report, they may include references to data not reported for Indigenous people and therefore not included in this Compendium.

The Report's statistical appendix contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. These data cover a range of demographic and geographic characteristics, including age profile, geographic distribution of the population, income levels, education levels, tenure of dwellings and cultural heritage (including Indigenous and ethnic status) (appendix A).

COAG has agreed six National Agreements (NAs) to enhance accountability to the public for the outcomes achieved or outputs delivered by a range of government services, (see chapter 1 for more detail on reforms to federal financial relations). The agreements include sets of performance indicators, for which the Steering Committee collates annual performance information for analysis by the COAG Reform Council (CRC).

There are no service specific NAs that relate to children's services. However, the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA)* establishes specific outcomes for reducing the level of disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians, and includes an indicator relating to access to quality early childhood education for Indigenous children. Data developments for reporting against the agreed indicator were underway at the time of preparing this report. It is anticipated that this indicator will be incorporated into the Children's services chapter for the 2012 Report.

**Figure 3.1 Performance indicators for children's services**



Source: 2011 Report, figure 3.2, p. 3.15.

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## Participation rates for special needs groups

‘Participation rates for special needs groups’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that services are provided in an equitable manner to all special needs groups in the community, and that there is consideration of the needs of those groups which can have special difficulty in accessing services (box 3.1).

### Box 3.1 Participation rates for special needs groups

‘Participation rates for special needs groups’ is defined as the proportion of children using child care and preschool 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 (for 0–5 and 6–12 year olds) and preschool services (3–5 year olds). Targeted special needs groups include children from a non-English speaking background, Indigenous children, children from low income families, children with disability, and children from regional and remote areas.

If the representation of special needs groups among children’s services users is broadly similar to their representation in the community, this can indicate equity of access. Therefore, a higher participation rate is desirable.

Data reported for this indicator are not directly comparable.

Data quality information for this indicator is under development.

Data for participation by special needs groups using Australian Government approved child care services for 2009-10 were drawn from the National ECEC Workforce Census 2010 and DEEWR administrative systems. Box 3.2 contains more information on the census.

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**Box 3.2 Australian Government National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census**

The *National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census* (National ECEC Workforce Census) was conducted in 2010 and is an initiative of the Australian Government in partnership with State and Territory governments. The information collected aims to provide comprehensive, current and nationally consistent data on access to early childhood education and care services, and staff qualifications and experiences.

This National ECEC Workforce Census replaces the Australian Government Child Care Provider Survey (AGCCPS) conducted in 2008-09 and the Australian Government Census of Child Care services (AGCCC) conducted in earlier years, as the source of non-administrative data available from the Australian Government.

The National ECEC Workforce Census collected information on children with special needs and staff in Australian Government approved child care services. The same information was collected in the AGCCPS and the AGCCC, although different methodologies were used. Variations in collection methodologies and different weighting methods affect the comparability of data across the collections. Therefore comparisons across time should be made with caution.

*Source:* DEEWR (2010).

At a national level, Indigenous children aged 0–12 years participated in child care at a lower rate (1.9 per cent) than their representation in the community (4.4 per cent). This was also the case for both the 0–5 age group and the 6–12 age group (tables 3.1 and 3A.2).

Data on representation of special needs groups in State and Territory funded and/or provided child care for children aged 0–12 are presented in table 3A.4.

**Table 3.1 Proportion of children aged 0–12 years from special needs groups attending Australian Government approved child care services, 2010 (per cent)<sup>a, b, c, d</sup>**

	<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>
<i>Children from non-English speaking backgrounds</i>									
In child care services	19.7	17.4	6.5	9.6	7.8	3.3	12.9	10.8	13.7
In the community, 2006	23.2	21.7	11.9	15.5	13.7	7.2	16.2	36.8	18.8
<i>Indigenous children</i>									
In child care services	2.1	0.6	2.9	2.1	1.4	1.5	0.9	9.4	1.9
In the community, 2006	4.1	1.2	6.2	5.6	3.3	6.5	2.3	39.2	4.4
<i>Children from low income families</i>									
In child care services	24.1	24.0	24.9	22.7	24.1	24.8	8.8	14.4	23.9
In the community, 2007-08	24.5	23.1	20.9	21.0	26.6	33.8	10.8	18.9	23.2
<i>Children with disability</i>									
In child care services	3.3	2.2	2.0	2.2	3.6	2.1	1.9	2.8	2.6
In the community, 2003	8.0	6.8	7.6	8.9	8.8	6.2	7.5	np	7.7
<i>Children from regional areas</i>									
In child care services	26.0	23.6	32.4	20.6	18.7	100.4	1.1	79.9	28.0
In the community, 2006	28.8	28.2	45.6	24.7	26.6	97.7	0.2	51.0	33.0
<i>Children from remote areas</i>									
In child care services	0.2	–	1.2	3.3	1.8	0.6	–	20.2	0.9
In the community, 2006	0.7	0.1	4.4	8.6	4.4	2.0	..	50.3	3.0

<sup>a</sup> Data on children in child care services represent the population of children attending child care in 2010. Data on representation in the community are reported for different years due to the availability of data and are sourced from either the ABS *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2003*, the *2006 Census of Population and Housing* or the *Survey of Income and Housing 2007-08*. <sup>b</sup> Data on child care services for 2010 are not directly comparable with previous years data (presented in table 3A.3) due to a change in data source. Refer to box 3.1 and table 3A.3 for more information. <sup>c</sup> See table 3A.3 for complete footnotes and definitions. <sup>d</sup> Data in italics have relative standard errors above 25 per cent, and need to be used with caution. – Nil or rounded to zero. .. Not applicable. np Not published.

Source: DEEWR (unpublished) administrative data collection and *National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census, 2010 (preliminary data)*; ABS (unpublished) *Survey of Income and Housing 2007-08*, Cat. no. 6523.0, *2006 Census of Population and Housing*, Cat. no. 2031.0, and *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2003*, Cat no. 4430.0; table 3A.3; 2011 Report, table 3.4, p. 3.19.

Data on the representation of special needs groups for children in State and Territory government funded and/or provided preschools are provided in table 3.2. For jurisdictions that were able to provide data, the patterns for children from special needs groups in preschool varied: Nationally, the representation of Indigenous children aged 3–5 years in preschool (5.3 per cent) was higher than their representation in the community (4.5 per cent) though this varies across jurisdictions.

Data on the representation of special needs groups in preschool in the year before full time school are presented in table 3A.4.

**Table 3.2 Proportion of children (aged 3–5 years) from special needs groups enrolled in State and Territory funded or provided preschools, 2009-10 (per cent)<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

<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<sup>d</sup></i>
Children from non-English speaking backgrounds									
In preschool services	11.1	17.1	3.8	na	11.4	na	21.0	na	10.6
In the community, 2006	23.2	21.6	11.6	15.6	13.5	7.2	16.1	38.7	18.7
Indigenous children									
In preschool services	4.9	1.3	7.8	9.3	6.3	5.2	3.2	43.2	5.3
In the community, 2006	4.1	1.2	6.4	5.8	3.5	6.4	2.3	41.8	4.5
Children with disability									
In preschool services <sup>e</sup>	5.5	6.2	6.0	3.1	13.8	na	4.5	4.0	6.1
In the community, 2003	7.7	6.5	8.6	10.2	8.3	7.2	14.3	np	8.0
Children from regional areas									
In preschool services	31.3	23.9	40.2	19.5	26.3	98.3	na	44.4	28.9
In the community, 2006	28.0	27.5	45.1	24.5	26.2	97.7	0.1	48.2	32.3
Children from remote areas									
In preschool services	1.2	0.1	12.4	8.3	5.7	1.7	..	55.6	4.0
In the community, 2006	0.7	0.1	4.7	9.0	4.4	2.0	..	53.1	3.2

<sup>a</sup> Data on children in preschool services represent the population of children enrolled in preschool in 2009-10. Data on representation in the community are reported for different years due to the availability of data and are sourced from the ABS *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2003*, *2006 Census of Population and Housing* and the *Survey of Income and Housing 2007-08*. <sup>b</sup> See table 3A.4 for complete footnotes and definitions.

<sup>c</sup> Data exclude innovative or flexible services that receive direct funding from the Australian Government and are targeted towards children from these groups. Data on preschool services can include some children aged 3 years or 5 years for all jurisdictions. Preschool data in the NT include some children aged greater than 5 years. <sup>d</sup> Data for Australia for children from non-English speaking backgrounds, children with disability and children from regional areas, in preschool, are the total of the sum of the states and territories for which data are available, and should not be interpreted as national data. Data for Australia for children from remote areas in preschool and Indigenous children in preschool, and data on the representation in the community represent all states and territories and can be interpreted as national data. <sup>e</sup> Data on children with a disability are not directly comparable because the definition of disability varies across jurisdictions. **na** Not available. **np** Not published. **..** Not applicable.

*Source:* State and Territory governments (unpublished); ABS (unpublished) *2006 Census of Population and Housing*, Cat. no. 2031.0 and *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2003*, Cat. no. 4430.0; table 3A.4; 2011 Report, table 3.5, p. 3.21.



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## Indigenous preschool attendance rates

‘Indigenous preschool attendance rates’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to ensure that services are provided in an equitable manner to all special needs groups in the community, and that there is consideration of the needs of those groups which can have special difficulty in accessing services (box 3.3).

### Box 3.3 Indigenous preschool attendance rates

‘Indigenous preschool attendance rates’ is defined as the number of Indigenous children absent from non-government preschools, as a proportion of all Indigenous children enrolled in non-government preschools. A child is deemed absent if they missed one or more of the sessions they were enrolled in during the reference week. Attendance rates are measured by absentee rates.

A low or decreasing absentee rate indicates a high or increasing rate of attendance at preschools, and is desirable.

Preschool attendance is not compulsory. Non-government preschools include preschool programs delivered in government funded, registered, licensed and/or approved services, and these arrangements vary across jurisdictions. Preschool programs operated by commercial providers are excluded. Data on Indigenous preschool attendance rates are limited to Indigenous children enrolled in non-government preschools, as Indigenous children enrolled in government preschools are not available (DEEWR unpublished).

Data reported for this indicator are not complete.

Data quality information for this indicator is under development.

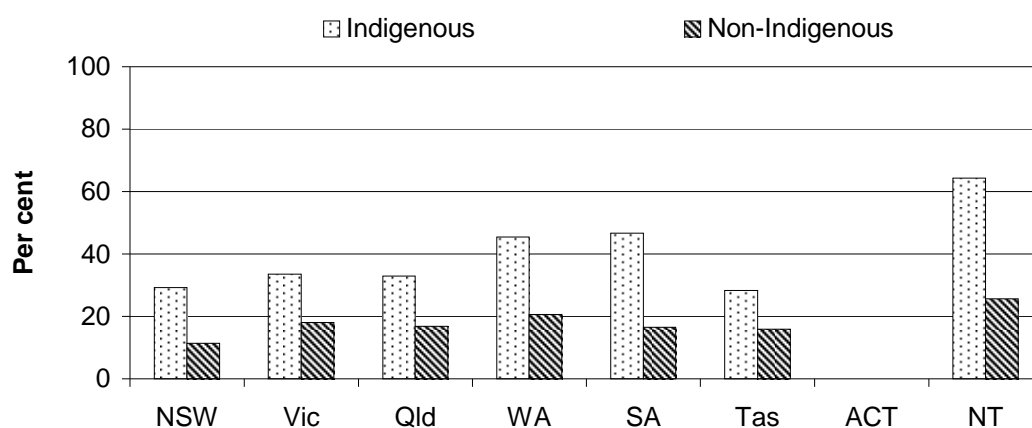
Indigenous preschool enrolments provide a broad indication of access to preschool. Data on Indigenous preschool enrolments were provided for all jurisdictions. Nationally in 2009-10, 11 407 Indigenous children were enrolled in State and Territory government funded and/or provided preschool. Of these Indigenous children, at least 6030 were enrolled in preschool in the year before full time school (table 3A.4). Data on Indigenous children’s representation in preschool compared with their representation in the community are presented in table 3.3. Data on Indigenous children enrolled in preschool for the period 2005-06 to 2009-10 are presented in 3A.5.

Indigenous preschool attendance rates provides a broad indication of the participation of Indigenous children in preschools. These data are sourced from the National Preschool Census (NPC) and relate only to non-government preschools. These data can overlap with the preschools data provided by State and Territory governments and are therefore not directly comparable with other preschool data

included in this Report. The NPC collected data from 98.1 per cent of the 3314 non-government preschools in scope for the 2009 NPC (DEEWR unpublished). This represents approximately 68.0 per cent of all government and non-government preschools, though this proportion varies considerably across jurisdictions (from 6.9 per cent in the Northern Territory, to 100.0 per cent in Victoria) (table 3A.6). Data for jurisdictions with a small number of non-government preschools should be interpreted with care.

In 2009 for jurisdictions where data were available (all except ACT), non-attendance by Indigenous children was higher than non-attendance by non-Indigenous children (figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.2 Enrolled children absent from non-government preschools, 2009<sup>a, b, c, d, e</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Data on attendance are limited to non-government preschools, and exclude government preschools. At the national level, approximately 68 per cent of children are in preschools deemed to be non-government, though this percentage varies across jurisdictions: 90 per cent in NSW, 100 per cent in Victoria, 93 per cent in Queensland, 27 per cent in WA, 18 per cent in SA, 26 per cent in Tasmania, 17 per cent in the ACT, and 7 per cent in the NT. Preschool attendance data for jurisdictions with a small proportion of non-government preschools should be interpreted with care. <sup>b</sup> Preschool attendance is not compulsory. <sup>c</sup> Attendance was measured during the week of 3–7 August 2009. Children are counted as absent if they are absent for one or more of the sessions that they were enrolled in during this week. Absences due to illness can be higher during winter than at other times of the year. <sup>d</sup> Data for non-Indigenous children are derived from data on Indigenous children and all children. <sup>e</sup> ACT Indigenous data and non-Indigenous data were not published for 2009 due to privacy reasons, therefore, the Australian total was also not published.

Source: DEEWR (unpublished) *National Preschool Census 2010*; table 3A.6; 2011 Report, figure 3.3, p. 3.23.

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## **Future directions in performance reporting**

### *COAG developments*

### *Report on Government Services alignment with National Agreement reporting*

It is anticipated that future editions of the Children's services chapter will align with applicable NIRA indicators. Further reporting changes might result from future developments in NA reporting.

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## Definitions of key terms and indicators

<b>Australian Government approved child care service</b>	A service approved by the Australian Government to receive Child Care Benefit (CCB) on behalf of families.
<b>Centre-based long day care</b>	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 could also receive care before and after school, and during school vacations. Centres typically operate for at least eight hours per day on normal working days, for a minimum of 48 weeks per year.
<b>Child care services</b>	The meeting of a child's care, education and developmental needs by a person other than the child's parent or guardian. The main models of service are centre-based long day care, family day care, outside school hours care (before/after school hours and 'pupil free days' care), vacation care, occasional care and other care.
<b>Children</b>	All resident male and female Australians aged 12 years or younger at 30 June of each year (unless otherwise stated).
<b>Children from low income families</b>	Families who are receiving the maximum rate of Child Care Benefit.
<b>Children's services</b>	All government funded and/or provided child care and preschool services (unless otherwise stated).
<b>Counting rules</b>	Prescribed standards, definitions and mathematical methods for determining descriptors and performance indicators for monitoring government services.
<b>Disability related care</b>	Care of children who have a developmental delay or disability (including an intellectual, sensory or physical impairment), or who have parent(s) with disability.
<b>Government funded or/and provided</b>	All government financed services — that is, services that receive government contributions towards providing a specified service (including private services eligible for Child Care Benefit) and/or services for which the government has primary responsibility for delivery.
<b>Indigenous children</b>	Children of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin who self identify or are identified by a parent or guardian to be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.
<b>Other services</b>	Government funded services to support children with additional needs or in particular situations (including children from an Indigenous or non-English speaking background, children with disability or of parents with disability, and children living in regional and remote areas).
<b>Preschool services</b>	Services usually provided by a qualified teacher on a sessional basis in dedicated preschools. Preschool programs or curricula could also be provided in long day care centres and other settings. These services are primarily aimed at children in the year before they commence full time schooling (that is, when children are 4 years old in all jurisdictions), although younger children could also attend in most jurisdictions.

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**Regional and remote areas**

Geographic location is based on the ABS's Australian Standard Geographical Classification of Remoteness Areas, which categorises areas as 'major cities', 'inner regional', 'outer regional', 'remote', 'very remote' and 'migratory'. 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.

The 'regional' classification used in the chapter is derived by adding data for inner regional and outer regional areas. The 'remote' classification is derived by adding data for remote, very remote and migratory areas.

**Service model**

The categories for which data were collected, namely:

- centre-based long day care
- family day care
- outside school hours care
  - before/after school care
- vacation care
- occasional care
- 'other' care
- preschool services.

**Special needs group**

An identifiable group within the general population who can have special difficulty accessing services. Special needs groups for which data are reported in this chapter include: children from a non-English speaking background; Indigenous children; children from low income families (Australian Government child care only); children with disability; and children from regional or remote areas.

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## List of attachment tables

Attachment 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 3A.3 is table 3). Attachment tables are provided on the Review website ([www.pc.gov.au/gsp](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp)).

<b>Table 3A.1</b>	Early Childhood Education and Care in Australia, as at 30 June 2010
<b>Table 3A.2</b>	Representation of special needs groups attending Australian Government approved child care services (per cent), by age group, 2010
<b>Table 3A.3</b>	Representation of special needs groups attending Australian Government approved child care services, children aged 0–12 (per cent)
<b>Table 3A.4</b>	Representation of children from special needs groups in State and Territory Government child care and preschool services, 2009-10
<b>Table 3A.5</b>	Indigenous children enrolled in State and Territory Government preschool services, 2005-06 to 2009-10
<b>Table 3A.6</b>	Children absent from non-government preschools, 2009

## References

DEEWR (Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations) 2010, *National Quality Framework – National Workforce Census*, [www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Pages/NationalWorkforceCensus.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Pages/NationalWorkforceCensus.aspx) (accessed 8 October 2010).