

National Early Childhood Development Strategy 2010-11 and 2011-2012 Progress Report

Introduction

The National Early Childhood Development Strategy (NECDS) - *Investing in the Early Years* was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 2 July 2009. The Strategy identifies the early childhood development outcomes that all governments are seeking to achieve for children by 2020, including existing commitments, areas for immediate action within current resources, and future areas for reform.

In endorsing the Strategy, COAG requested that Commonwealth and state and territory governments progress its implementation, and asked for further advice in 2010 on a range of issues, including a progress report on immediate actions within existing resources, outlined in Table 3 of the Strategy document (p.26). The first Progress Report was endorsed by the then Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) in December 2010.

This report summarises the effort and progress made during the period 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2012. It highlights collaborative effort across governments, portfolios and organisations, and a maturation of many of the early childhood focussed or related initiatives that underpin the Strategy. This provides a platform to meet the 2020 vision for an early childhood development system that “Australia has a world class early childhood development services that form a cohesive, accessible, and nationally recognisable system.

Contributors to this report include all jurisdictions, through their membership of the Standing Council on Schools, Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC), and other relevant Commonwealth, state and territory agencies through their membership of the Health and Community & Disability Services Standing Councils.

Background

The National Early Childhood Development Strategy represents a vision that “*By 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation*”. It proceeds to identify a policy framework that not only articulates a vision, but also defines outcomes, progress measures and key elements that make up an effective early childhood development system. In doing so, the Strategy recognises firstly that early childhood is a complex area where numerous and diverse government and nongovernment stakeholders work across a range of areas of responsibility; and secondly, it

requires a flexible approach that enables continual learning and responsiveness to emerging issues, and takes into account the different needs, priorities and available resources in each jurisdiction.

The Strategy has seven outcomes. These are:

1. children are born and remain healthy
2. children's environments are nurturing, culturally appropriate and safe
3. children have the knowledge and skills for life and learning
4. children benefit from better social inclusion and reduced disadvantaged, especially Indigenous children
5. children are engaged in and benefitting from educational opportunities
6. families are confident and have the capabilities to support their children's development
7. quality early childhood development services that support the workforce participation choice of families.

Achievement of these outcomes is being pursued under six key reform priorities. These are:

1. Strengthen universal maternal, child and family health services
2. Support for vulnerable children
3. Engaging parents and communities in understanding the importance of early childhood
4. Improve early childhood infrastructure
5. Strengthen the workforce across early childhood development and family support services
6. Build better information and a solid evidence base.

Overview

This report summarises the effort and progress made during the period 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2012. It highlights collaborative effort across governments, portfolios and organisations, and a maturation of many of the early childhood focussed or related initiatives that underpin the Strategy.

The focus of work is under both Priorities 1 (*Strengthen universal maternal, child and family health services*) and 2 (*Support for vulnerable children*). Highlights under Priority 1 include collaborative work nationally under the National Maternity Services Health Plan, and the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health - Healthy Children Initiative, as well as individual jurisdictional initiatives such as the Victorian Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Key

Age and Stage consultations. Highlights under Priority 2 nationally include progress in implementing the National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan and the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. Jurisdictional initiatives included New South Wales' Best Start Kindergarten Assessment, Queensland's Referral for Active Intervention and South Australia's Disability Justice Plan.

Contributions to Priority 3 (*Engaging parents and communities in understanding the importance of early childhood*) are developing both nationally and at state/territory levels. This includes the ongoing work under the Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story project (being led by South Australia) and the coordination of all jurisdictions with the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) to disseminate information about the National Quality Framework, including groundwork for the assessment and rating of services. Jurisdictional initiatives include Tasmania's Launching into Learning and the Northern Territory's Families and First Teachers programs. A significant contributor to Priority 4 (*Improve early childhood infrastructure*) during the reporting period at the national level was the development and introduction of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, and the progress towards 'universal access' to preschool under the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education. Other contributing initiatives included the Australian Capital Territory's ACT Children's Plan Building Block 5 which strives to facilitate the development of services, programs and environments for children and families that are based on the principles such as prevention and early intervention; child-centeredness, family and community focus.

Priority 5 (*Strengthen the workforce across early childhood development and family support services*) saw significant progress made in the development of the National Early Years Workforce Strategy which was subsequently launched in late 2012, and the National Early Childhood Development Symposium, which saw papers and information made available in mid 2012 via the web leading into the event itself later that year. Western Australia implemented its Remote Indigenous Professional Learning project. Under Priority 6 (*Build better information and a solid evidence base*), significant collaboration led to another near full coverage of children in the first year of school in the second Australian Early Development Index, and work under the National Information Agreement for Early Childhood Education and Care, which led to the first ever national minimum dataset for early childhood and the first and second National Collection on Early Childhood Education.

Towards 2020

During 2011-12, a sub-committee of the Early Childhood Development Working Group (ECDWG) drafted an Implementation Plan for the Strategy for the period 2012-13 to 2014-15. This draft Implementation Plan identifies under each of the Strategy's key reform priorities a range of ongoing activities, plus some new specific projects. It is anticipated that future actions under the Strategy will focus on:

- Better use of data and evidence, to support better access by developmentally vulnerable children and their families/carers to early identification, intervention and appropriate services
- Better service integration, to build a more comprehensive service platform for all children across early childhood education and care, child and maternal health and family and parent support services

- Better workforce capability through sufficient, skilled people able to adapt to new ways of working across disciplines.

The strength of the Strategy comes from its encouraging and supporting an ongoing culture of collaboration and providing an overarching framework for, and perspective on the various policy and program elements within it – ensuring that the Strategy is more than simply the sum of its parts while also reducing the possibility of children being left behind due to the existence of systemic gaps in knowledge, policy and service delivery.

NECDS REFORM PRIORITY 1 - Strengthen universal maternal, child and family health services

NECDS Outcome	Activity
<p>1. Children are born and remain healthy</p> <p>(N.B. *Denotes activity which falls under the responsibility of the Standing Council on Health.)</p>	<p><u>Medicare Healthy Kids Check</u></p> <p>In July 2008, the Australian Government introduced the Healthy Kids Check as a Medicare Item for children over the age of three and under the age of five years, to ensure they were healthy, fit and ready for school. The check is an assessment of physical health, general wellbeing and development.</p> <p>Through the Government’s 2011-12 Delivering National Mental Health Reform Budget package, \$11 million was provided over five years to expand the Healthy Kids Check to include consideration of emotional wellbeing and development, and to bring forward the target age of the check from four to three years of age.</p> <p>A multi-disciplinary expert group was established to advise on the additional social and emotional wellbeing content of the health check, and how it will be carried out. The expert group has been asked to provide advice on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an emotional wellbeing and development component • a training resource for GPs and other health professionals providing the check • a mapping exercise to identify available child health and development services • linkages to other projects planned or underway. <p>The expert group has developed recommendations against its Terms of Reference. These are being considered by the Minister. The expansion of the Healthy Kids Check is not aimed at screening children for mental illness. The focus of this change is to help children develop well so that they build resilience and avoid behavioural and mental health issues, and to ensure support is provided to families and children where needed.</p> <p>The expanded Healthy Kids Check will be made available in the 2012-13 financial years, with expected implementation in early 2013.</p> <p><u>National Evidence-based Antenatal Care Guidelines*</u></p> <p>Module 1 of the Guidelines covers the first trimester of pregnancy, with Module 2 covering the second and third trimesters of pregnancy. Module 1 is expected to be considered by Australian Health Minister’s Advisory Council later in late August 2012. Module 2 of the Guidelines is currently being developed and expected to be publicly released in late 2013.</p>

National Maternity Services Plan*

The **National Maternity Services Plan** (the Plan) recognises the importance of maternity services within the health system and provides a strategic national framework to guide policy and program development across Australia for the period 2010-15. The Plan focuses on primary maternity services during the antenatal, intrapartum and six-week postnatal period for women and their babies. Access, service delivery, workforce and infrastructure are four key priority areas identified in the Plan. An annual report on progress is provided to Health Ministers each November.

Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2010-2015*

The Commonwealth continues to chair and provide secretariat services to the Breastfeeding Jurisdictional Senior Officials Group (BJOG) which is implementing the Strategy. The Commonwealth has directly funded several projects under the Strategy, including work on measuring breastfeeding rates, the Australian Breastfeeding Association's National Breastfeeding Helpline, national delivery of breastfeeding education and training to volunteer counsellors and health professionals, revision of Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers, training and education materials for health workers on use of infant growth charts, work on revisiting Australia's response to the World Health Organization's International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, and the development of an evaluation toolkit for breastfeeding programs and projects.

National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health - Healthy Children Initiative*

The **Healthy Children Initiative** (up to \$325.5 million over seven years from 2011-12) provides funding to states and territories to deliver programs for children aged from birth to 16 years that focus on improving the intake of fruit and vegetables, as well as increasing levels of physical activity and reducing rates of overweight and obesity in early childhood education and care environments and school settings.

Australian Government Plan for Early Childhood and Plan for Tackling Obesity – (including the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) Guidelines for Early Childhood settings (Get Up and Grow materials))*

The **Get Up and Grow** resources have recently been evaluated nationally and the results will be used to inform future adaptations of the resources to support the early childhood sector in promoting healthy eating and physical activity to children aged 0-5 years, complementing the National Quality Standard. The Get Up and Grow resources have recently been adapted to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and are expected to be available in late 2012 or early 2013.

National Partnership Agreement on Essential Vaccines*

The **National Partnership Agreement on Essential Vaccines** (NPEV) is an agreement between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. The NPEV aims to improve the health and well-being of Australians through the cost-effective delivery of immunisation programs under the National Immunisation Program. Under the NPEV the Commonwealth funds the purchase of vaccine while the states and territories deliver the vaccination programs in their jurisdiction. The NPEV is an ongoing agreement and was introduced in July 2009.

National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development

The National Partnership comprises of three elements, two of which are health-focussed. **Element 2** relates to the increased access to antenatal care, pre-pregnancy and teenage sexual and reproductive health. As at 30 June 2012, all jurisdictions are making significant progress in increasing access to and provision of antenatal care services targeted for young Indigenous women, and the provision of sexual and reproductive health services to Indigenous teenagers.

Element 3 relates to the increased access to and use of maternal and child health services by Indigenous families. As at 30 June 2012, a total of 85 organisations had been approved nationally to receive **New Directions: Mothers and Babies Services** funding. Of these, 78 organisations are now operational and the remaining organisations are preparing for services delivery by securing premises, recruiting staff and obtaining medical equipment. These services are available across Australia in urban (16), regional (37), and remote (32) locations. This program is part of the Australian Government's contribution to the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT is progressing with all activities. A senior officials group has been established to progress implementation of the **National Breast Feeding Strategy** and facilitate collaboration and sharing of information and expertise to promote national consistency across key issues. Members possess a range of expertise in the areas of nutrition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, midwifery, maternal and child health, lactation support and related policy and program management.

The **Get Up and Grow** campaign has been promoted to Early Childhood Services (long day care and family day care) as a useful resource through the *Kids at Play* (KAP) project. KAP aims to create supportive environments in ACT Early Childhood Services to promote active play and healthy eating, and to promote these activities to families of children aged birth to five years.

The expanded **Healthy Kids Check** will be made available in the 2012-13 with expected implementation in early 2013. A multi-disciplinary expert group has been established to advise on the additional social and emotional wellbeing content of the health check, and how the check will be carried out.

Northern Territory

Element 3 of the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development (NP IECD) relates to access and use of maternal and child health services by Indigenous families. Standardised programs delivering optional maternity care and coordinated care for mothers and babies are in place and will be strengthened as priority programs including:

- an agreed universal maternity care plan providing a qualified midwife in Territory Growth Towns
- the **Strong Women Strong Babies Strong Culture Program** to deliver a community developed bi-cultural program by Aboriginal women incorporating traditional practices.

Queensland

In Queensland, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services funds Queensland Health to provide and implement a **Home Health Visiting** program in recognition of the short and long term benefits of maternal and child health visiting programs on both a child's and families' health and well being

Queensland also implements the **Child Health Passport** for children in the child protection system. The Child Health Passport aims to ensure that children receive effective and coordinated health care when entering out-of-home care. The CHP contains the information a foster requires to meet the day-to-day health needs of the child.

A personal **Health Record and Child Health Information Book** has been reviewed to encourage parents to access information and child health assessments for children. Parenting fact sheets are reviewed every year (alternating years for major and minor reviews) and parenting and child development information have been translated into community languages.

A universal post-natal contact program has been implemented that provides:

- antenatal assessment for key risk factors that impact on the health of both mother and baby – depression, psychosocial wellbeing, domestic violence, tobacco, alcohol and other drug use
- community partnerships and service networks to ensure appropriate referral for families at risk
- post discharge follow-up of mothers during the first week after the birth of a baby
- greater integration of maternity and child health services, for enhanced continuity of care between hospital and community settings (including establishment of **Newborn and Family Drop-in Services**).

Other services/strategies to support better antenatal health include: smoking and alcohol cessation support during pregnancy; **13HEALTH advisory service**, including a universal child health advisory service; **Healthy Hearing** screening program, providing universal newborn hearing screening; and **Healthy Eating during Pregnancy** online professional education package, assisting health professionals to support antenatal health and nutrition.

Other initiatives include:

- The **Safe Infant Sleeping E-Learning Resource** which assists health professionals to provide latest evidence based support and advice to parents on safe infant sleeping to reduce the risk of SIDS and SUDI
- Establishment of a **Statewide Clinical Networks** to provide policy, planning and implementation guidance on maternity and neonatal, and child and youth issues
- A statewide community awareness campaign is underway (using print, television, radio, online and the **QKindy** magazine), promoting the benefits of kindergarten programs for Queensland families and encouraging parents to enrol their children

- Professional development activities for early childhood teachers on the **Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline** and inclusive practice
- Implementation of the **Flying Start Read to Children** at any age campaign (print and television media) that promoted the importance of early reading in the home environment.

South Australia

Newborn and Children's Hearing Screening Program is a population based hearing screening service for newborn infants aged 0 - 6 months, which includes screening of all infants (following birth) in both public and private hospitals across the state. The **Metropolitan Aboriginal Family Birthing Program** provides support to pregnant women through a partnership team; comprising a midwife, an Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Care worker, doctor, and other family support workers as required. Much of the care is provided close to, or in the woman's home. The **Planned Home Birth Model** which commenced at Flinders Medical Centre in July 2012 has expanded programs that utilise midwives. The **National Perinatal Depression Initiative** developed referral pathway guides for women experiencing depression and mental illness by conducting antenatal and postnatal screening.

A forum is planned to address maternity care issues for adolescents, women in prison, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women experiencing domestic violence. The **Patient Assistance Transport Scheme** administered by Country Health SA was reviewed and changes implemented. SA amended relevant drugs and poisons legislation to enable appropriate prescribing rights for midwives. South Australia provides for free access for health professionals (in particular Aboriginal Health Workers) to an e-learning program that meets Step 2 of **Baby Friendly Health Initiative** and Aboriginal specific breastfeeding training and resources.

An interactive, self-assessed **Health Kids Check** e-learning resource to increase the knowledge and confidence of Practice Nurses and Aboriginal Health Workers to undertake the Healthy Kids Checks for children about to enter the school has been introduced. The modules include information about child development with components focussing on the specific needs of Aboriginal children and families in a clinic, home or rural context.

In alignment with the **National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health** there is a strong universal public health system which will be strengthened by new legislation which will require local government to develop health plans.

The **Plan for Tackling Obesity (OPAL)** is coordinated through local government and works with communities to create opportunities to eat well and be active operating across 20 local communities across the state and one community in the Northern Territory. New information about healthy eating and physical activity are provided annually to assist families to make healthy choices. An evaluation of the program is underway. The **Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in the Early Years (HEPA)** project helps educators promote healthy eating and active play in preschools, childcare centres, and Family Day Care.

The **Start Right Eat Right program** aims to ensure that healthy food is provided in state child care centres. Just over 86 per cent of SA centres have been trained in the program.

Under the **National Partnerships Agreement on Essential Vaccines** the take up of vaccines among families is high and promotional campaign aimed at improving the timeliness and uptake of the vaccines scheduled at 4 years of age is encouraged through the use of a story book called *Jacks Big Adventure*.

Under **Element 1** of the **National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development** South Australia is establishing four Aboriginal **Children and Family Centres** at Ceduna, Whyalla, Christies Beach and Ernabella to provide early childhood development programs and services for Aboriginal children from prenatal to five years and their families including:

- child and maternal health
- high quality early learning programs for young children
- parenting and family support
- community development activities.

The Ernabella Children and Family Centre was officially opened on 15 August 2012. Staff, including the Centre Directors, Community Development Coordinators and Family Services Coordinators, are developing partnerships within the community and with other agencies and supporting children and families.

Initiatives and programs under **Element 2** include:

- **“Yarning On”** Aboriginal Sexual Health Program consisting of the Aboriginal Focus Schools Program and the Investing in Aboriginal Youth Program run by SHine SA.
- All National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations participated in the 2012 sexually transmittable infections screening (STI) program
- Expansion of the **Aboriginal Family Birthing Program** is occurring. Women are cared for by a group of midwives and one Aboriginal and Maternal Infant Care worker throughout pregnancy, labour, birth and after the baby is born.

Under **Element 3**:

- the **Family Home Visiting (FHV)** service which provides a two year parenting support program, is offered to eligible families identified by Child and Family Health nurses at the Universal Contact Visit.
- the **Early Childhood Development Program** is the culturally appropriate service model for the APY Lands. The service which commenced in Pukatja and Kenmore Park in February 2012 is delivered each fortnight and has a focus on infants aged 0 to 3 years and their families.
- **Focus Schools Program** run by SHine SA continues to support and training to schools with a high proportion of Indigenous attendance.

- An Aboriginal ear health promotion material has been developed and a training program is being conducted with staff in early childhood settings and an ear health screening program is being developed.

Tasmania

Tasmania is implementing new **Model of Care for Child Health and Parenting Services** – an agenda for change and reform over the next 12 months, which includes a range of different ways of working with families.

Victoria

The Victorian Government in partnership with local councils provided access to 10 free **Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Key Age and Stage** consultations for a record number of over 70,000 new-borns in 2010-11. The service supports families and their children with an emphasis on parenting, prevention and health promotion, developmental assessment, early detection and referral and social support. The 2012-13 Budget included \$62.7 million to provide access to the Key Age and Stage consultations for more than 10,000 additional children.

Participation in MCH is strong and growing – in the two years to 2010-11, participation in the 8 week MCH visit increased from 94.7 per cent to 96.3 per cent, and in the 4 month visit from 91.5 per cent to 93.7 per cent.

The **Healthy Kids Check/3.5 year MCH Key Ages and Stages consultation** is currently being promoted via radio, television and print advertisements. The campaign commenced in September and will run until November 2012.

In 2011 the Child Health Record was revised to better meet the needs of parents and practitioners and reflect changes to the MCH implemented in 2009 through the revised Key Ages and Stages Framework. The new **My Health and Development Record** is a parent-held record of their child's health, growth and development which provides a prompt for parents to attend MCH consultations and facilitates communication between parents, health professionals and other service providers.

The MCH Key Ages and Stages Framework includes the **MCH Safe Sleeping Checklist** developed in partnership with SIDS and Kids to raise awareness of SIDS and Sudden Unexpected Death in infancy and to provide risk reduction strategies for SIDS and fatal sleep accidents for families and professionals. The checklist is completed at the initial MCH home visit and any subsequent home visits and followed up at the 8 week MCH consultation.

The **Enhanced MCH** service provides a more intensive level of support for children and families at risk of poor outcomes, in particular where there are multiple risk factors. The 2012-13 State Budget included \$16.3 million over four years to sustain Victoria's Enhanced MCH service.

In response to the **National Breastfeeding Strategy**, Victoria developed a **Victorian Breastfeeding Action Plan** and commenced the **Victorian Breastfeeding Research Project**, a randomised controlled trial testing the effect of community interventions such as early home visits by an MCH nurse on the maintenance of breastfeeding rates for women with identified breastfeeding issues. In addition, 980 Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Nurses completed an e-learning program to increase their skills and confidence in the area of breastfeeding.

The **Measuring and Monitoring Growth in the Early Years** eLearning resource was developed by the Royal Children's Hospital with funding from the State government. It is designed for MCH nurses to implement best practice techniques for weighing, measuring and monitoring the growth of children from birth to school entry.

The **Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program** for early childhood education and care services has been introduced as part of the **National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health**.

Western Australia

In the Western Australian 2012/2013 budget, the State Government committed \$58.5 million in new funding over four years to improve access to community maternal and child health services. This is in addition to the \$11.25 million committed State funds from 2009 to 2014 to increase access to, and use of maternal and child health services by Aboriginal families through **Element 3 of the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development**.

The WA Department of Health provides a universal schedule of community child health checks for children 0-3 years of age but is strengthening this by implementing statewide the **Enhanced Aboriginal Child Health Schedule** for Aboriginal families with additional needs. This schedule provides a more culturally secure and an increased number of contacts with a community child health nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker.

Western Australia has adopted and is promoting the World Health Organisation ten steps to successful breastfeeding in the **Statewide Baby Friendly Health Initiative** – hospital breastfeeding policy and also the seven points for community health in the **Community Health Breastfeeding Policy**.

Healthy eating and lifestyle is being promoted through the *WA Healthy Schools* project, the **Crunch&Sip**[®] initiative and the **Healthy Schools Food and Drink Projects**. These school-based partnerships between the WA Departments of Health and Education are supported by the **National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health Healthy Children Initiative**.

NECDS REFORM PRIORITY 2 - Support vulnerable children	
NECDS Outcome	Activity
<p>2. Children’s environments are nurturing, culturally appropriate and safe</p> <p>3. Children have the knowledge and skills for life and learning</p> <p>4. Children benefit from better social inclusion and reduced disadvantage, especially indigenous children.</p> <p>(N.B. ** Denotes activity which falls under the responsibility of the Standing Council on Community and Disability Services)</p>	<p><i>National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development</i></p> <p>The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development (NP IECD) has been established to improve outcomes for Indigenous children in their early years and to contribute to COAG Closing the Gap targets for Indigenous Australians. Through the NPA IECD, 38 Children and Family Centres (CFCs) are being established to provide access to a range of services including child care, early learning and parent and family support services, with states and territories taking the lead role in implementing it. The Government has contributed \$292.62 million to establish the centres.</p> <p>Additional elements of the National Partnership Agreement provide for increased access to antenatal care, pre-pregnancy and teenage sexual and reproductive health programs and for increased access and use of maternal and child health services by Indigenous families. The Commonwealth’s funding of \$292.62 million over six years for the CFCs will contribute to the Closing the Gap targets in regards to Indigenous early childhood development.</p> <p>As at 6 June 2012, three of the 38 CFCs were operational. A further six CFCs are now operational (as at 2 October 2012). All 38 centres remain on track to be completed by the end of the NPA IECD (30 June 2014). The completed centres are located in Whittlesea, VIC; Doomadgee, Mornington Island and Mareeba, QLD; Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing, WA; Pukatja (Ernabella), SA; Bridgewater, TAS and West Belconnen, ACT. These CFCs offer a range of programs that nurture and create a culturally appropriate and safe environment for children. For instance, programs that will support parents in their parenting role, such as Tuning into Children, and Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities are offered at the Bridgewater CFC in Tasmania. In the ACT, children and family programs such as Best Foot Forward (guiding children’s behaviour), Children’s Behaviour and Wellbeing Clinic (managing issues relating to behaviour management and children’s emotional wellbeing) are offered to improve social inclusion and reduce the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous children.</p> <p>Under the NPA IECD, it was agreed that a comprehensive evaluation would be undertaken throughout the life of the Agreement to determine its effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes. Urbis has been contracted to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the NPA IECD from January 2012 to June 2014.</p> <p><i>Australian Early Development Index and other data linkage</i></p> <p>The 2012 Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) national implementation is being led by the Australian Government (through DEEWR), in close partnership with state and territory jurisdictions and contracted agencies who deliver key aspects of the AEDI. The 2012 AEDI data collection occurred from 1 May to mid August 2012, with DEEWR working closely with AEDI coordinators in each state/territory to achieve agreed completion rates. Data from the 2012 collection is scheduled for</p>

release in March 2013, with results publicly available for approximately 95 per cent of Australian communities. These results will be provided through a national report, online community maps, community profiles and participating schools will receive their own school profile.

The 2012 AEDI national implementation includes \$3 million funding for AEDI focussed research to supports the expectation that the AEDI results will increasingly be used to inform government policy and program management. A set of 10 research projects are being funded at this time – a mix of short term and longer term projects that include investigating the relationship between the AEDI and mental health predictors/outcomes; as well as analysis of the social and emotional development and wellbeing of young children (including jurisdictional differences).

AEDI data is also available for other research purposes including data linkage. DEEWR is working with authorities in each jurisdiction to establish agreements to facilitate the linkage of AEDI data with other datasets. An agreement is in place with SA/NT data link, with other jurisdictions expected to follow in due course. Data linkage projects currently being scoped include linkage of AEDI data to **NAPLAN** to help identify whether the AEDI has any predictive value in terms of children's later progress at school and linkage of AEDI data with the **Longitudinal Study for Australian Children (LSAC)**. Also, the 2012 collection cycle aligns with the ABS Census cycle offering a unique window of opportunity for critical data linkage to occur.

*National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children (NFPAC) ***

Under the **Building Capacity, Building Bridges Project** the Commonwealth Government provided \$2.24 million, over three years to 2013, for the development and roll-out of an accredited training program to boost the capacity of community service workers to identify and respond to families and children who are at-risk - Building Capacity, Building Bridges. A trial of the Building Capacity Building Bridges project is currently underway across 12 sites: Alice Springs (NT), Kempsey (NSW), Lismore (NSW), Campbelltown (NSW), Townsville (QLD), Ipswich (QLD), Mirrabooka (WA), Midland (WA), Playford (SA), Launceston (TAS), Hume/Broadmeadows (VIC), Cardinia (VIC).

The **Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (CAARS)** Taskforce was established in May 2009 and subsequently met four times. The Taskforce developed an agreed model for a common assessment tool which was endorsed in June 2010. On 20 December 2010, Minister Macklin approved further funding for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) to undertake a trial of CAARS in four locations. The four community organisations undertaking the trial are: Northern Connections in Elizabeth (SA); Interrelate Family Centre in Lismore (NSW); Gippsland Lakes Community Health in Gippsland (VIC); and the Rockingham Kwinana Division of General Practice in Kwinana (WA). The CAARS trial will conclude on 31 August 2012 with reporting to Ministers in 2013.

National Quality Framework and approved learning frameworks

On 1 January 2012, the **National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care** (National Quality Framework) was established. It applies to most long day care, family day care, preschool (or kindergarten) and outside schools hours care services. The framework aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services.

A central focus of the **National Quality Framework** is on outcomes for children. Concepts of equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the National Quality Framework. The **National Quality Standard** is a key aspect of the National Quality Framework and sets a new national benchmark for the quality of education and care services.

The National Quality Standard is linked to national learning frameworks that recognise children learn from birth. All education and care services must provide a program that is based on an approved learning framework, which considers the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child and takes into account the individual differences of each child.

The following national learning frameworks have been developed to guide educators in developing quality programs that support children's learning: **Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia** (Early Years Learning Framework) and **My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia** (Framework for School Age Care).

The **Early Years Learning Framework** has a strong emphasis on play-based learning, recognising that play is the most appropriate vehicle to help young children learn. It will guide educators in the delivery of nationally-consistent and quality early childhood programs across a range of early childhood settings.

The **Framework for School Age Care** was officially launched in August 2011 and will inform the development of programs that enhance children's experiences and development through leisure and play-based activities. The Framework builds on the Early Years Learning Framework and extends the principles, practice and outcomes to accommodate the contexts and age range of the children and young people who attend school age care settings.

Under the National Quality Framework, Early Childhood Education and Care services will need to provide evidence of their use of the relevant Frameworks in designing and delivering their early learning programs.

Through the National Quality Standard and the national learning frameworks, children's identity and culture is honoured and supported.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan – Actions under the ‘Readiness for School Domain’

The **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014** (the Action Plan) commits all governments in Australia to a unified approach to closing the gap in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. It consists of 55 Actions at either National, Systemic or Local level, across 6 domains – ‘Readiness for school’, ‘Engagement and connections’, ‘Attendance’, ‘Literacy and numeracy’, ‘Leadership’, ‘quality teaching and workforce development & Pathways to real post-school options’. Under the School Readiness domain, progress has been made in relation to three actions:

- Action 1- **The Early Years Workforce Strategy** (EYWS) has been jointly developed between the Australian and state and territory governments to support the early childhood education and care workforce. It identifies a number of key priorities including increasing the number of early childhood educators and specifically, attracting more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the early childhood workforce, as well as strengthening the sector’s skills and cultural competencies
- Action 2 - To support staff in remote indigenous early childhood services to operate under the **Early Years Learning Framework** (EYLF), the Australian Government funded the development of the Remote Indigenous Professional Development Package which will provide a detailed interpretation of the EYLF as it applies in the remote indigenous context
- Action 3 - The Australian and state and territory governments have collaborated to provide relevant information regarding longitudinal datasets and research on integrated services, barriers and enablers of success, curricula and resources that would promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s skill acquisition and successful transition to school. A synthesis of this information is expected to be published on the Standing Council for School Education and Early Childhood website in late 2012.

National Disability Strategy**

On 13 February 2011, COAG endorsed the **National Disability Strategy 2010-2020**. The Strategy sets out a 10-year national policy framework to guide government activity across six key outcome areas (including learning and skills, covering early childhood, schooling and tertiary education). The Strategy aims to influence the planning, design and delivery of mainstream policies, programs services and infrastructure, as well as the specialist disability services systems so that people with disability can participate as equal citizens in all areas of Australian life.

During the first year of the Strategy, the Australian Government has been working in conjunction with state and territory governments to prepare a national action framework for implementing and evaluating the Strategy. This action framework, the **National Disability Strategy 2010 -2020, Report to the Council of Australian Governments 2012**, incorporating an implementation plan, **Laying the Groundwork 2011-2014** and an evaluation and reporting framework, will be presented to COAG in late 2012. As well as the national implementation plan, each state and territory government will have its own disability plan to drive improved outcomes through mainstream policies, programs, services and infrastructure.

The Standing Council on Community and Disability Services' first 2-yearly, high level, progress report on the implementation of the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 will be provided to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2014.

Australian Capital Territory

In the ACT the **Australian Early Development Index** (AEDI) is becoming embedded as a data set to inform policy development within the ACT. Two examples of this are the inclusion of the AEDI as an indicator within the *Picture of ACT Children and Young People Report* and the inclusion of the AEDI as a headline indicator within the Community Services Directorate Strategic Plan. The ACT has provided in principal support for an AEDI data linkage project funded through the Population Health Research Network.

The ACT is participating in the current evaluation on the **National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development** (NP IECD) and awaits the final report before considering its recommendations.

New South Wales

Interagency collaboration and support has played a key role in utilising **Australian Early Development Index** (AEDI) data to inform the delivery of services for children and families. Cross-agency, whole of government Families NSW networks incorporated AEDI data into their local planning processes. **AEDI Local Champions** were based in seven regions across New South Wales. Agency managers and local champions attended professional learning around the AEDI. Eight local champion teams undertook training in late 2010/early 2011. The **NSW AEDI Coordinator** provided support including facilitating an understanding of specific AEDI community results and maps, developing resources for use with service providers and presenting keynotes/workshops at local forums. As a result of the work undertaken by local champions, relationships with the targeted community have been enhanced and opportunities provided for families to have a voice in the strategies implemented in the future.

NSW has provided presentations and workshops for key stakeholders including Early Childhood Networks, government and non-government organisations, health agencies and prior to school services e.g. Families NSW Management Groups so that key stakeholders are kept informed about AEDI collection status – 2012/2015.

NSW schools are using information provided by the AEDI on the developmental vulnerability of children as they enter school to guide their early years planning and to engage in reflective conversations about what is working well and what can be improved. They have provided workshops for parents to improve their understanding of early brain development and the value of parents building strong relationships with their children from birth.

In NSW the 2012 AEDI data collection, led by the NSW Department of Education and Communities, will provide additional data to further build the picture of early childhood development. More than 290,000 checklists were completed nationally, with approximately 94,500 in NSW. Data was collected in NSW from 96.4 per cent of schools and for 97.5 per cent of the population of children in their first year of full-time schooling.

Across NSW, the Department of Education and Communities operates 100 preschools for young children one year prior to school entry. A total of 507 young Aboriginal children were enrolled in the Department's 100 preschools in 2011, which was 11.5 per cent of the total enrolment. In all of the preschools priority of access is given to children whose families experience disadvantage including Aboriginal children. Eleven of the preschools are designated specifically for Aboriginal children and another thirteen are located in areas servicing Aboriginal communities.

In NSW, the **Wambinya Early Years Program** targets early learning in literacy and numeracy and is currently being implemented across 105 schools. A key component of the program is the focus on comprehension and vocabulary knowledge and 'English as a Second Language /Dialect' specific resources embedded into **Best Start**. The project provides Aboriginal Student Learning Support Officer positions to support early childhood teachers in the implementation of early literacy and numeracy plans and personalised learning plans for young learners.

Kids Excel Phase 2 was implemented in 20 of the 100 Departmental preschools. Seven of these 20 preschools are designated Aboriginal preschools to cater specifically for Aboriginal children. The other 13 preschools are located in areas that have significant Aboriginal populations. *Kids Excel* Phase 2 provided Aboriginal Community Engagement Officers (ACEO's) which enabled targeted preschools to deliver quality transition to Kindergarten programs and create opportunities for Aboriginal parents to engage in their children's education. The ACEOs liaised with the community to support enrolment, attendance at preschool and transition to school for Aboriginal children.

The Department has:

- contributed to the development of community maps that charted the locations of early childhood programs, resources and assets
- arranged community forums to increase awareness of AEDI results and to strengthen relationships between service providers
- assisted in the development of community initiatives in a range of fields such as parental support, early literacy, gross and fine motor development and nutrition.

The Department has developed, and is using the **Best Start Kindergarten Assessment**, a linguistically and culturally inclusive on-entry assessment which identifies each student's literacy and numeracy skills and understandings at the beginning of

Kindergarten. The assessment provides information for Kindergarten teachers so that they can build on each student's current knowledge and experiences in literacy and numeracy and develop quality teaching and learning programs.

Service providers were appointed to run 6 Aboriginal **Child and Family Centres** across NSW – these centres bring together a range of early childhood, health and family support services to improve the overall health and wellbeing of children and support their families. [Note: this initiative is administered through the Department of Family and Community Services]

Additional funding provided by the Commonwealth Government to NSW through the **National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education** facilitated increased per-child funding amounts provided to community preschools. These increased funding amounts have resulted in higher preschool participation rates in New South Wales, particularly for Indigenous and disadvantaged children.

Northern Territory

The NT Government endorsed the **National Disability Strategy (NDS) 2010-2020**: report to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) 2012 that was submitted to COAG on 25 July 2012. The Report includes the first implementation plan for the NDS entitled *Laying the Groundwork 2011-2014*, which outlines the six main action areas to progress change driven by the NDS.

Strengthening universal maternal, child & family health services has occurred through:

- progressing the development of a standardised **Infant and Child Health Program (Healthy Under 5 Kids Program)** to cover all children across the NT)
- progressing the development of a **Child Health Information System** for the NT to more accurately measure the health of children in the NT as well as the delivery and impact of services provided
- funding a study to be conducted by the Menzies School of Health Research to provide a more detailed picture of the determinants of the health of young people in the NT, as well as the most appropriate interventions to address them in the NT.

Under the **National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development** the locations and community needs of five Indigenous **Child and Family Centres** were identified, including the ongoing support and monitoring of service integration. There have been delays in the construction of services due to land tenure delays. The service delivery model is in partnership with communities identified as **Strong Start Bright Future** sites and has established **Community Partnership Groups** on identified sites. The **Common Assessment and Referral & Support (CAARS)** NT trial has been implemented and evaluated in two remote sites.

Queensland

Queensland has provided extensive training and support to the early childhood sector to support implementation of the **Early Years Learning Framework** and the **National Quality Agenda** and developed and provided a comprehensive suite of professional development resources regarding the **Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline** for teachers.

The **Early Childhood Teacher Scholarships** program allows eligible long day care or kindergarten educators holding an Advanced Diploma or three year degree to upgrade their qualification to become a qualified early childhood teacher, teach an approved kindergarten program and gain teacher registration with the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT). At 30 June 2012, more than 352 Early Childhood Teacher Scholarships had been provided to staff currently working in early childhood education and care services to upgrade their qualifications so they can deliver a quality kindergarten program. At 30 June 2012, more than 2300 teachers were recognized as qualified to deliver approved kindergarten programs in Queensland.

Local implementation plans have been established and are being delivered in all remote service delivery locations.

The **Making Tracks in Cape York: Enhancement of Maternal and Child Health Services** aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children 0-8 years a healthy and safe start to life through effective women's health services, ante-natal and infant care, improved education outcomes and child protection services. This includes service enhancements over four years (from 2009-10) for:

- a range of core local health promotion and early intervention services supported by more visiting specialist and allied health services
- a baby basket initiative to support young mothers by supplying baby products at targeted times in the antenatal, postnatal and 6-month to toddler stages, dependent on attendance at child health clinics and acceptance of home visits with child health nurses
- a baby friendly health initiative to establish breastfeeding at birth and the training of health care providers in the promotion and sustainability of long-term breastfeeding (noting support will be provided to assist women where breastfeeding is not possible or where an infant is failing to thrive and breastfeeding cannot be sustained).

Under the **National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development**, Queensland employs Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maternal and Infant Care Workers in major maternity units, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health workers and Infant Care Health Teams across priority sites. The **Deadly Ears** program coordinates the effort to manage and reduce the high rates of childhood ear disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Health Home Visiting provides a universal services for families with children aged 0 – 2 years with additional visits for families at risk in selected locations. **Referral for Active Intervention** (RAI) has been operating since 2006-07 to improve the safety and wellbeing of at risk and vulnerable children, young people and their families, reduce the number of notifications to the child protection system, minimize progression through the statutory child protection system, and increase the capacity of **Child Safety Services** to respond immediately to those children and young people identified at highest risk.

The **Helping Out Families** initiative is aimed at strengthening services in the community to respond effectively and earlier to families who are in need of support. This initiative includes the establishment of new services, as well as providing additional funding to existing organisations that support children, young people and their families. Established in target locations, the **Supporting Families' Alliance** aims to strengthen connections between local services to ensure vulnerable children and their families have improved and to support more direct referral pathways between services, in each of the 11 RAI sites across the state.

In 2011-13, funding of \$10.1 million will be provided to 11 community controlled **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support Services** to reduce the risk of harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and address Indigenous over-representation in the child safety service system.

Queensland developed and released in 2010 a statewide education program for teachers delivering kindergarten programs (**Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline**) to maximise consistency and comparability across service providers and ensure all children were well prepared for life and school. To ensure that cost is not a barrier to participation in early education, Queensland is providing additional kindergarten funding to support kindy participation of vulnerable families, such as those with a Health Care Card, those living in disadvantaged areas, and multiple birth families with three or more children. Funding is also provided to support equitable access to services for children of priority groups (eg culturally and linguistically diverse, ATSI, low income, disability).

Disability support funding of \$1.7 million was made available in 2012 for children with a disability participating in a kindergarten program. Under the first round of funding 175 kindergarten services received funding for 265 children with funding of between \$2,000 and \$6,000 per child for teachers to make educational adjustments to their kindergarten program. Applications for round two of the program closed on 27 July 2012.

Children aged up to six years who have a developmental delay or who are at risk of having a developmental delay can receive early intervention services from the **Family and Early Childhood Service**. This service assists families with information and planning, multidisciplinary therapy, referrals to other specialist and mainstream services, counselling, linking with other families and support groups and transition to child care, kindergarten and Prep.

Children with autism up to age six can access early intervention services through the **Autism Early Intervention Initiative**. Early intervention services and therapies are provided through Autism Queensland and the AEIOU.

Children with a physical disability aged up to eight years of age can access early intervention services through the **Early Intervention for Children with a Physical Disability Initiative**. Services include therapy support, information for families about their child's disability, referrals to other services, assistance to access aids and equipment, and parenting support. Families can access the initiative directly through the Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland, Montrose Access and Sunshine Coast Therapy Services.

The Queensland Government has provided free access to an interpreter service for families calling the **Kindy hotline** and for kindergarten services, set up a Google translate service in more than 50 languages on the Department of Education, Training and Employment website and had key parent resources translated into 30 languages.

To respond to local needs, joint planning for early childhood development services that integrate early childhood education and care, child and maternal health and family and parenting support occurs at a central and community level through **Early Years Centres** and **Children and Family Centres**.

Queensland is continuing implementation of its **Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan (2011-14)**, which includes initiatives such as:

- early childhood teacher scholarships
- incentives for rural and remote teachers
- fee waivers for TAFE children's services courses
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) package for carers, targeted for areas of needs
- Supporting a pathway for existing Advanced Diploma qualified staff to attain teaching qualifications.

South Australia

South Australia continues to expand its network of **Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting** for children from birth to age eight and their families. Twenty five Children's Centres, which bring together care, learning, family support, community development and health services at the one location, are now helping families across South Australia and nine more centres will be established by 2014. Strong partnerships between government and non-government organisations are supporting children and parents to access programs they need.

Northern Connections is supporting the **Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (CAARS)** trial in South Australia on behalf of partner organisations including SA Health, Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) and Adelaide Northern Division of General Practice. The collaborative approach has strengthened the capacity of the trial to engage a wider range of universal service providers.

The **Building Capacity Building Bridges** trial aims to strengthen the capacity of adult service providers to support parents to meet the immediate needs of their children, and to strengthen collaboration between adult focussed and child and family focussed services.

To strengthen capacity to reunify children with their birth families, where it is safe to do so, a **Reunification Initiative** has been developed. This enables the trailing of a multi-disciplinary approach to child protection and it uses new team configurations that re-focus work more specifically on family preservation and reunification efforts. The Initiative is driving cultural and practice change which is evidence informed, strengths based, and solution focused. Within participating offices, there is a strong emphasis on the use of rigorous assessment to ensure that children are reunified with their families in a timely and well considered manner.

The **High Risk Infant** program provides an early intervention response in the metropolitan areas where it has been identified that infants may be at risk of future harm. The aim is to increase parental capacity to care for their “at risk” infant through accurate assessment of parental capacity and identification of parental strength and risk factors. Where it is assessed that the risk to the infant cannot be secured by the family a decision is made expeditiously to place the infant into an alternative care placement.

The **Safe Babies Team** has also commenced a pilot program to engage women and their families during the ante-natal period. This early intervention approach offers the woman and her family practical assistance and works toward increasing parenting capacity to reduce the safety risks for the newborn infant.

A key component of the High Risk Infant program is to work in collaboration with other government and non-government organisations to improve the service response to infants and their families.

South Australia is the lead for the School Readiness domain for the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan** (ATSI EAP) and reports to the Early Childhood Development Working Group on the progress being made across the national collaborative actions. These are:

- development of the **National Early Years Workforce Strategy**
- support use of the **Early Years Learning Framework**
- synthesise/reporting of information from all jurisdictions on longitudinal studies, curricula and resources to promote school readiness and the inclusion of ATSI children
- commission development of on entry assessment frameworks and guidelines.

The last report on the implementation of the ATSI EAP indicates that progress is being made in all four domain areas.

In SA the state-wide **Preschool Bilingual** program and the **Aboriginal Family Literacy** project provide support in maintaining home languages and reducing disadvantage. Engagement with Aboriginal Families is enhanced through contacts resulting

from the Aboriginal Individual Learning Plan in DECD preschools. Work related to this is underway with Anangu and non-Anangu educators in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands

The **National Disability Insurance Scheme** (NDIS) will develop a new way of funding and delivering disability services which is more individualised and delivers greater choice and control to individuals. South Australia was the only state or territory specifically targeting children in their launch model. The launch will provide support to children with disability up to the age of 14 across the State. The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion has commenced planning with the NDIS Transition Agency to prepare for the launch.

The **Strong Voices – A Blueprint to Enhance Life and Claim the Rights of People with Disability in South Australia (2012-2020)** provides a long term plan for the way people with disability, their families and carers are supported in South Australia. The Blueprint highlights the need for policy and service responses to have a child and gender focus.

South Australia is in the process of developing a **Disability Justice Plan** to improve outcomes for people with disability in contact with the justice system. In addition, South Australia will introduce amendments to the *Evidence Act 1929* to improve outcomes in criminal proceedings for young children and people with an intellectual disability.

In 2011-12 Disability Services created a specific **Child and Youth Services** directorate to enable a dedicated focus on the specific needs of children and young people with disability and their families.

Disability Services is working in partnership with the Australian Government on a coordinated approach to information that enables families and health professionals to locate State and Commonwealth Government services that will be of specific assistance to children and young people with disability. Disability Services is also in the process of implementing the 'team around the child' approach within Child and Youth Services. Disability Services is also working with the Department for Education and Child Development to pilot the use of this approach for school-age children with complex needs. Key elements of the approach include family-centred practice, building on the child's strengths and interests, and using the family's routines and natural environment to facilitate the child's development.

Tasmania

Launching into Learning is now offered in all government schools in Tasmania. This program provides the opportunity for children and their families to participate in a range of learning and development opportunities prior to commencing kindergarten. 12 **Child and Family Centres** run a variety of health, education and family support and advisory programs to assist with children's development. Both of these initiatives have a focus on working with families in disadvantaged areas or where services are hard to access.

Victoria

In Victoria, an initial whole-of-government response to the **Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry** was released in May 2012. The directions paper – **Victoria's Vulnerable Children – Our Shared Responsibility** – outlines the first-year initiatives, longer-term commitments and areas requiring further consideration as a result of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry report tabled in February 2012. The reforms are structured around five key action areas:

- Building effective and connected services
- Enhancing education and building capacity
- Making a child-friendly legal system
- Providing safe, stable and supportive out-of-home care
- Introducing accountability and transparency.

As part of the response to the Inquiry, the 2012-13 State Budget included:

- \$16.3 million over four years to sustain Victoria's **Enhanced Maternal and Child Health** services
- \$16.5 million over four years to engage vulnerable families in early learning
- \$8.3 million over four years to provide early childhood education and care for vulnerable three year olds known to child protection.

This included continued funding for **Access to Early Learning**, a new service model providing a more intensive approach to engaging children known to child protection and their families in early childhood education and care programs, across four Victorian regions. The model includes a key facilitation worker, outreach family support, professional and practice development and brokerage funding.

The **kindergarten fee subsidy** provides concession card holders, Aboriginal children and asylum seeker and refugee children with access to free kindergarten in the year before school. The 2011-12 State Budget provided \$41.5 million over four years for the continuation of this subsidy.

The 2011-12 Budget also provided additional funding of \$18.2 million to support children with disabilities and developmental delays, including:

- \$10 million to expand **Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services** for an additional 246 children with disabilities to attend kindergarten
- \$8.2 million to continue the provision of 150 additional **Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS)** and 150 flexible support places.

The Victorian **ECIS Quality Framework** has also been developed and trialled, and workforce training and professional development provided to promote practice improvements.

Victoria is leading coordination for the **National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development** with direct responsibility for Element 1 – *Integration of Early Childhood Services through Children and Family Centres*, and three components of Element 3 - *Increase access to and use of maternal and child health services by Indigenous families* – MCH for Aboriginal children and families, Aboriginal Best Start, and Supported Playgroup and Parent Initiative for Aboriginal children and families.

Under Element 1, Victoria is establishing **Aboriginal Children and Family Centres** in the city of Whittlesea (completed November 2011) and in Bairnsdale, East Gippsland Shire (due for completion June 2013). The centres will provide a mix of early childhood and family support services, including long day care, kindergarten for 3 and 4 year old Aboriginal Children, visiting professionals such as MCH nurse, counsellors, midwife, and other programs including In-Home Support, Koorie Early Childhood Field Officers and Early Childhood Intervention Services.

Western Australia

Armadale Secondary Family Support Network (AFSN) provides a single entry point for families, young people and vulnerable children. It commenced service delivery on 2 April 2012. Ten local family support agencies have partnered with Parkerville Children and Youth Care to provide services as part of the AFSN and the Armadale district office of the Department for Child Protection. The AFSN received 145 referrals from 2 April 2012 to 30 June 2012. Of these, 107 resulted in open cases. KPMG is conducting an evaluation of the AFSN, with a six month report scheduled for September 2012 and the final evaluation report to be completed in March 2013.

Best Beginnings Service is a structured home visiting service for high risk families with infants from the antenatal period up to two years of age. The service is provided as a partnership between the Department for Child Protection and Department of Health, and is targeted to parents with specific risk factors that make their child vulnerable to poor attachment, developmental delay and poor life outcomes. The Best Beginnings service has been evaluated on three occasions by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research with favourable findings.

Most Remote Community Schools in Western Australia host playgroups and/or permit children younger than the kindergarten age to participate in play based early childhood programs. Numerous schools in rural and metropolitan locations collaborate with Playgroup WA to host community-run playgroups for children and families prior to kindergarten entry.

The **National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development** provides for the establishment of five **Children and Family Centres (CFC)** in four regional and one metropolitan location in WA. The selected locations for CFCs ensure that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable communities in WA will benefit from this initiative.

Through State funds supplementing **National Partnership for Early Childhood Education** funding, the Department for Communities administers **Best Start** program which aims to improve life opportunities and school readiness of Aboriginal children from birth to age five.

The **2011 Western Australian Early Childhood Education and Care Conference** hosted Dr Stuart Shanker as keynote speaker to outline cutting edge research about self-regulation and better ways to set children on the path to intellectual and emotional health. He subsequently returned to Western Australia as thinker in residence hosted by Western Australia's Commissioner for Children, conducting numerous public forums and media appearances.

Since the mid-90s, Western Australian children have had universal access to a minimum of 11 hours of kindergarten taught by a degree qualified teacher and enrolment rates have consistently exceeded 95 per cent. Through the **National Partnership on Early Childhood Education**, this provision is being expanded to 15 hours per week across all public, Catholic and Independent school. In 2012, over 75 per cent of all schools are offering 15 hours per week of kindergarten; the balance offer kindergarten for 11 hours per week.

On entry assessment of literacy and numeracy occurs in all public schools early in the first year of full-time schooling. This enables teachers to ascertain children's on-entry skills and understandings to inform planning and to support those who need more time and to extend those who perform well.

All age eligible children in every community across WA have access to preschool (kindergarten) through a public, Catholic or Independent school. In addition, targeted programs exist for Indigenous children, children for whom English is an additional language, and children with a range of additional physical, sensory and intellectual needs through program adjustments as appropriate.

NECDS REFORM PRIORITY 3 - Build parent and community understanding of the importance of early childhood development

NECDS Outcome	Activity
<p>6. Families are confident and have the capabilities to support their children’s development</p>	<p><u>Engaging Families in the ECD Story Project</u></p> <p>Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story aims to better engage parents, carers and the community to increase their understanding of evidence-based information from the neurosciences about early childhood development and thereby influence their interactions with children to maximise early childhood outcomes. The project is one year into a two year term and is on time and within budget. A strong coalition of support for the project has been fostered from across sectors. A National Steering Group is developing a strategic social marketing plan with clear directions for campaign development and potential evaluative approaches.</p> <p>Australian Capital Territory</p> <p>The ACT have been active participants in the Steering Group for phase one and phase two of the Engaging Families in the ECD Story project. The ACT supports progressing the development of the parenting toolkit to guide the development of program supporting families.</p> <p>New South Wales</p> <p>In NSW the Department of Education and Communities, in conjunction with the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), is disseminating information about the new National ECEC Ratings system under the National Quality Framework to assist parents and the community understand the new ratings system and what it means for services.</p> <p>Northern Territory</p> <p>Families as First Teachers (FaFT) has been established in all Territory Growth Towns. Six mobile FaFT hubs provide services in Katherine, Barkley and Central Australia with four more expected within 2012. In collaboration with identified communities, eight bi-lingual baby board books are being developed. Abecedarian elements were trialled and are being integrated into FaFT programs in 2011-12.</p> <p>To support the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education, a range of strategies were employed to raise the profile and understanding of the importance of preschools in communities to encourage regular attendance. This has included working with FaFT Family Educators, Child and Family Leaders and schools to support carers and families to understand the importance and long term benefits of frequent and regular attendance at preschool, and increasing numbers and range of preschool delivery models to suit family/community need</p>

Queensland

The **Australian Early development Index (AEDI) Coordinating Committee** continues to advise on matters of AEDI implementation in Queensland.

Queensland provides universal child health and development information through the *Personal Health Record and Child Health Information Book*, as well as the **13HEALTH Child Health Advisory Service**, and universal health home visiting. Parenting fact sheets are reviewed every year to ensure information is up to date, and have been translated into community languages to increase accessibility.

South Australia

Two discussion papers have been released for public discussion on the future development of the governance and structure of the Department for Education and Child Development. These are;

- **Discussion Paper no 4 Every Chance for Every Child.** South Australia has taken the lead to bring together services for children and families under the umbrella of a single agency that puts child development first. Health, education, and wellbeing are not separate aspects of a child's life and children also don't grow up in isolation from their social and family circumstances..
- **Discussion Paper no 5 Legislation Reform.** South Australia has established child development as one of its seven major priorities and foreshadowed new legislation to articulate and entrench the fundamental importance of children, young people and their families to South Australia's long-term future and place children and young people at the centre of everything they do. The proposed legislation will support the Every Chance for Every Child strategy to create a stronger, child-friendly state and generate lasting opportunities for every child.

Learning Together is a program for families with children aged birth to four. Its overarching aim is to engage families in their children's learning in order to improve learning outcomes for children. Learning Together was recognised by the OECD as an 'innovative learning environment' in 2011. Preliminary results from a three year evaluation project indicates the following (after at least three terms of involvement in Learning Together programs) there is a significant increase in families' understandings about literacy behaviours. It's dimensions include:

- *Learning Together SACE* - part of the Learning Together program in some sites enables parents to complete their SACE while focussing on aspects of parenting and children's learning.
- *Learning Together @ Home* - is a program that connects with families primarily, but not exclusively, through home visiting. Learning Together @ Home aims to enhance the ability of families to support their children's learning through play.

A **Universal Contact Visit** is offered to all parents in South Australia by a registered community Child and Family Health nurse following the birth of their baby. The visit is comprehensive, and includes conducting the first child health check, responding

to parents' needs and providing information on feeding and settling their baby, and ensuring a safe environment for the baby.

The **Family Home Visiting Program** is a two year nurse led preventative parenting program based on building a partnership between the Child and Family Health Service nurse and the family, to provide a supportive environment and the best possible developmental opportunities for children. The program has a multi-disciplinary approach, including Aboriginal Cultural Consultants for families who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Parenting SA provides South Australian parents with up-to-date printed information about good parenting practices and provides information and resources to assist parents. This includes Parenting Easy Guides, free public seminars on parenting topics and '*Right from the Start*' a small, colourful picture book provided to parents of all newborns in SA with a version specifically designed for Aboriginal parents.

The **Work Life Balance Strategy** involves key employer, union and other workplace partners. It develops and promotes options regarding how work is organised (eg allowing employees to work in non-traditional work patterns and locations that better fit their personal commitments) in order to manage work and life demands. The Strategy provides targeted funding to employers.

Tasmania

Launching into Learning is now offered in all government schools in Tasmania. This program provides the opportunity for children and their families to participate in a range of learning and development opportunities prior to commencing kindergarten. **12 Child and Family Centres** run a variety of health, education and family support and advisory programs to assist with children's development. Both of these initiatives have a focus on working with families in disadvantaged areas or where services are hard to access.

Victoria

In Victoria, over 2000 families took part in a randomised controlled trial of the Victorian government-funded **Smalltalk** program, which aims to assist disadvantaged parents with children aged from 6 months to three years support their children's early learning and development.

The 2011-12 State Budget included \$3.4 million to continue the **Maternal and Child Health Line**, a 24-hour telephone service that provides advice, support and referrals for families with young children. The Victorian Government also continued to provide **Parentline**, a telephone counselling service for parents and carers of children aged from birth to 18 years.

In addition, extensive information for parents on early childhood development was provided on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/default.htm>.

Western Australia

Under the **National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development**, a facility from which parent support and training can be delivered is provided in five high needs localities in WA. Through the Child and Family Centre's (CFC's), more cohesive coordination of existing provision has become possible and will be capitalised on from 2012-13 with the establishment of a further 10 State-funded Child and Parent Centres in additional high needs communities.

The Department for Communities represents Western Australia on the **Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story** National Steering Committee and has been active in promoting the project with stakeholders in Western Australia.

The **Positive Parenting Program** (Triple P) is a form of behavioural family intervention developed by Professor Matt Sanders at the University of Queensland's Parenting and Family Support Centre. The Program is a multi-level, evidence-based intervention for the prevention and treatment of behavioural problems and conduct disorders in children. With the emphasis on prevention, Triple P empowers parents and supports schools to promote positive behaviour management in an educational setting. The Department of Education in collaboration with the Departments of Health and Communities implement this program for families throughout Western Australia, with a focus on the parents of 3 – 8 year old children.

NECDS REFORM PRIORITY 4 - Improve early childhood infrastructure

NECDS Outcome	Activity
<p>2. Children’s environments are nurturing, culturally appropriate and safe</p> <p>5. Children are engaged in and benefitting from educational opportunities</p> <p>7. Quality early childhood development services that support the workforce participation choices of families</p>	<p><u>National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education</u></p> <p>The National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education (NP ECE, also referred to as ‘universal access’) has been established to ensure that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program. The program is to be delivered by a four-year university-trained early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, in the year before full time schooling (often referred to as ‘preschool’ or ‘kindergarten’). The commitment is to be fully implemented by mid 2013. The Australian Government entered into Bilateral Agreements under this National Partnership with all state and territory governments, which specify the actions and strategies to be undertaken by each jurisdiction to achieve universal access.</p> <p>Overall, the 2011 National ECEC Collection indicates a national average of 81 per cent of children aged four and five years are enrolled in preschool compared to the 2008 baseline figure of 76.4 per cent and the Report on Government Services 2007-08 figure of 69.9 per cent. While these datasets are not mutually comparable, overall enrolment trends in early childhood education programs are positive. The improvement in average number of hours of participation in preschool nationally is particularly positive, rising from a national average of 11 hours to 16.3 hours between 2008 and 2011.</p> <p>In 2009, approximately 64 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were enrolled in an early childhood education program in the year before full-time schooling; this compared with 70 per cent of all children (National Preschool Census). According to the National ECEC Collection, in 2011 the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in an early childhood education program in the year before full-time schooling was 75 per cent, an increase of 11 percentage points since 2009 (noting there are some differences in scope and counting methodology across these two collections). Data from the 2011 National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection and the ABS Indigenous population projections indicate that over 91 per cent of Indigenous children living in remote communities are enrolled in preschool in the year before full-time school. The same data sources indicate that a significantly lower proportion of indigenous children are enrolled in regional areas (76 per cent) and major cities (63 per cent).</p> <p><u>National Partnership on National Quality Agenda for ECEC</u></p> <p>On 1 January 2012, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (National Quality Framework) was established. It applies to most long day care, family day care, preschool (or kindergarten) and outside schools hours care services. The framework aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services.</p>

The **National Quality Standard** is a key aspect of the National Quality Framework and sets a new national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. The National Quality Standard was informed by research about best practice and the way in which high quality education and care contributes to positive outcomes for children. It brings together the seven key quality areas that are important to outcomes for children: Educational program and practice; Children's health and safety; Physical environment; Staffing arrangements; Relationships with children; Collaborative partnerships with families and communities; and Leadership and service management.

Reforms under the National Quality Framework include improved educator to child ratios, improved qualification requirements for educators, and a new national quality assessment and rating process. The new nationally consistent educator-to-child ratios came into effect on 1 January 2012 for children aged birth to 24 months. The assessment and rating process began in January 2012 with services developing their Quality Improvement Plans and assessment and ratings visits commenced in June 2012.

National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development

The **National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development** (NPA IECD) has been established to improve outcomes for Indigenous children in their early years and to contribute to COAG Closing the Gap targets for Indigenous Australians. Through the NPA IECD, 38 **Children and Family Centres** (CFCs) are being established to provide access to a range of services including child care, early learning and parent and family support services, with states and territories taking the lead role in implementing it. The Government has contributed \$292.62 million to establish the centres.

Additional elements of the National Partnership Agreement provide for increased access to antenatal care, pre-pregnancy and teenage sexual and reproductive health programs and for increased access and use of maternal and child health services by Indigenous families. The Commonwealth's funding of \$292.62 million over six years for the CFCs will contribute to the Closing the Gap targets in regards to Indigenous early childhood development.

As at 6 June 2012, three of the 38 CFCs were operational. A further six CFCs are now operational (as at 2 October 2012). All 38 centres remain on track to be completed by the end of the NPA IECD (30 June 2014). The completed centres are located in Whittlesea, VIC; Doomadgee, Mornington Island and Mareeba, QLD; Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing, WA; Pukatja (Ernabella), SA; Bridgewater, TAS and West Belconnen, ACT. These CFCs offer a range of early childhood services including: long day care and occasional care services as well as playgroups.

Australian Capital Territory

The **ACT Children's Plan Building Block 5** works to facilitate the development of services, programs and environments for children and families that are based on the principles of prevention and early intervention; child-centeredness, family and community focus; collaboration and coordination; strengths-based, inclusive practice and evidence and accountability.

Children are engaged in and benefitting from education opportunities through the **National Partnership on Early Childhood Education** to preschool which is increased to 15 hours per week from 2012 and with five Low SES National Partnership schools in the ACT.

ACT has high usage of early childhood services that support workforce participation and so the focus in the ACT is on support of quality.

New South Wales

To support the implementation of the **National Quality Framework (NQF)**, 12 information sessions on the National Regulations were held across NSW in Oct/Nov 2011 in the lead-up to the implementation of the NQF. Targeted information sessions for preschools, long day care and outside school hours care services were held between November 2011 and February 2012 to support services in transitioning to the NQF. 16 joint Department of Education and Communities (DEC)/Australian Children's Education and Care Authority (ACECQA) forums were held in 8 locations across NSW over July – September 2012 to assist the sector in understanding the roles of the different Agencies in administering the NQF. During 2010 and 2011, services across Australia had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with and begin using the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) before it became a formal requirement as part of the NQF. Many services in NSW took advantage of the lead time to begin making the transition to the new Framework.

Through the implementation of the **National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education**, funding provided to NSW under the Bilateral Agreement has enabled higher per-child funding allocations to be provided to all eligible community preschools to support progress toward the universal access targets, including increased access to, and affordability of, community preschools. The NSW Government's **Preschool Investment and Reform Plan (PIRP) "Growth Phase" program**, which began in 2009 and ended on 30 June 2011, worked to expand the sector's capacity so that more children across the State would be able to attend preschool for 2.5 days a week in the year prior to schooling.

Two non-government agencies, CareWest and Community Child Care Cooperative, were contracted to work directly with NSW community preschools in order to generate these additional places in priority areas where supply was not meeting the local demand for preschool places, and where strategies could be effectively targeted to increase participation by disadvantaged groups. The **PIRP Growth Phase program** provided funding to support a range of growth and access strategies, including a capital funding component of approximately \$22 million. Many services received support to, for example, engage Aboriginal community development workers to stimulate preschool participation within local Aboriginal communities, especially those with lower participation rates. Community Child Care Cooperative and CareWest both reported significant progress toward achieving their targets for additional preschool places.

Northern Territory

To support the introduction of the **National Quality Framework**(NQF), NT-wide strategies were developed and implemented to transition ECEC services to the NQF by 2012, including capacity building for preschools to prepare for approvals and quality rating. Work was conducted across national project and working groups to draft legislation, introduce new uniform legislation and national rating system as directed by the national authority, and implementation systems clarify micro policy issues in relation to the new system. Grants and subsidies were provided to education and care services to continue to support working families using child care. Community based child care centre were supported to strengthen business and governance practices in light of regulatory changes. Eight Budget Based Funded services (BBF) that are no longer in scope for the NQF were supported to analyse their funding models and consider if they wish to work towards approval for mainstream Child Care Benefit (CCB) funding with a view to bring them into the NQF.

Gains were made against all **National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education** performance benchmarks for 2010-2012. Scholarships and mentoring assistance was provided to teachers and educators to up skill to 4 year early childhood teaching qualifications. Access to and increased enrolment and attendance at preschool for Indigenous children included:

- roll out of additional mobile preschools
- identification of new sites within existing hubs
- continuation of support to existing hubs
- strengthening of relationships with local communities and increase attendance.

Under the **Families as First Teachers** program, qualified and local staff work with the community to deliver place-based programs supporting families with children prior to school entry. The program works to help families gain knowledge about early learning, health, hygiene, nutrition and parenting. 15 Indigenous officers successfully gained Cert III Community Services in 2011. Approximately 1700 children and their families currently engage in the program.

Queensland

By June 2012, 105 extra kindergarten services had opened across the state in areas of need, with a total of 121 to be established by the end of 2013.

As at 30 June 2012, 921 long day care services were approved kindergarten program providers.

Four **Early Years Centres** (EYC's) and associated satellite services have been established, providing integrated early childhood education and care, parenting and family support, and child and maternal health services across 13 communities. Each of the four EYC's deliver a range of programs that aim to increase access to and participation in kindergarten, with a focus on reaching children from culturally diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

Ten **Children and Family Centres** offering integrated services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are being established under the National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

Child and Family Support Hubs are operating in 25 rural, remote or disadvantaged communities.

The **Enhancement Grant** funding program and the **Renovation and Refurbishment and Essential upgrades** capital programs is a funding initiative commenced to enhance the quality of kindergarten programs by supporting services to purchase new equipment and resources; conduct minor repairs or coordinate promotional activities.

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring all children can enjoy the lifelong benefits of kindergarten programs, and is providing universal access to kindergarten by establishing extra kindergarten services in areas of need, providing funding to support long day care services to deliver kindergarten programs and implementing other initiatives. Queensland is continuing to make strong progress in achieving universal access to kindergarten with 68 per cent of children participating in a kindergarten program in 2011, up from 29 per cent at baseline in 2008.

The **Rural and Remote Teacher Incentive Scheme** provides a \$12,000 benefit paid directly to teachers in installments over two years to attract and retain kindergarten teachers in rural and remote areas. At 30 June 2012, 15 services were approved to receive the incentive, and 8 teacher applications were approved.

Pilot of an e-kindy program for children unable to regularly attend a centre-based ECEC service is underway, so as to review and revise program materials for implementation in 2013.

As part of implementing the **National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care**, Queensland has:

- passed legislation applying new national legislation for ECEC and school age care services from 1 January 2012
- transitioned over 2500 ECEC services into the new regime
- delivered comprehensive training of Authorised Officers
- commenced assessment and ratings visits for services from June 2012
- continued its sector support role, through ongoing consultation and engagement to assist services to transition to the NQF and provided ongoing support for the roll out of the national information system.

Queensland is implementing several initiatives that support the transition to school, including:

- **Kindergarten Transition Statement**, a parent-held record that describes a child's motivations, strengths and skills, understandings and approaches to learning, to promote continuity of learning as children move into the schooling sector

- co-location of new kindergarten services with a school where possible
- locally based transition activities and programs as identified and developed by schools and communities
- facilitated playgroups on selected school sites to support transition to school.

The Queensland Government has committed \$4 million over four years to better prepare children for school, focusing on areas of disadvantage and engaging parents in their child's learning journey.

In November 2011, outcomes of a research project completed by Queensland University of Technology (QUT) into barriers to and incentives for accessing and participating in kindergarten programs in Queensland was published along with the Queensland Government's response on the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) website.

South Australia

As part of the **National Partnership on National Quality Agenda for ECEC**, the South Australian *Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011* came into effect on 1 January 2012, including the *Education and Care Services National Law 2010*. This legislation establishes the Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board of South Australia. The Board is the regulatory authority in South Australia for the approval, monitoring, and quality assessment of services in accordance with the national legislative framework and in relation to the National Quality Standard. Under the National Quality Framework (NQF) the SA Department of Education and Child Development is the approved provider of 393 preschools, 23 Children's Centres and 12 family day care schemes.

South Australia is unique in the government sponsorship it provides to the state's Family Day Care schemes, with administrative support to over 800 privately operating educators who provide care for around 10 000 children a year. Approximately 351 (Out of Schools Hours Care) OSHC services operate in South Australia, with 63 per cent located on DECD school sites. This service provision recognises the importance and intrinsic value of school age children's recreational and leisure time in the early years and the significant role that DECD and school Governing Councils play in meeting the community's need for school age care.

Under the **National Partnership on Early Childhood Education**, from July 2012 all of the 413 Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) funded preschools are offering 15 hours per week of preschool to children enrolled in their year before full-time school. A further 70 non-government child care centres and schools are being provided with grant subsidies to provide 15 hours of preschool under the provisions of the National Partnership Agreement for Early Childhood Education as at July 2012.

SA has a coordinated approach to professional learning and supporting service improvement through a collaborative relationship with early childhood services in all SA regions. Professional learning and resources are provided with a particular

focus on improving service provision and quality both through implementing the **National Quality Standards (NQS)** and the **Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)**, supported by the **EYLF Educator Guide** and **Reflect, Respect, Relate**; and through specific projects such as **Integrating Preschools with Schools, Centre of Innovation, Aboriginal Family Literacy Project, iPad project**, and the **Cultural Competence** project. Liaison with local government in many areas has influenced the design and impact of outdoor areas.

The **Integrated Services Improved Outcomes (ISIO)** project has been established to identify and realise the opportunities and benefits for children and young people that arise from the formation of the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD). The aim of the project is to develop models of integrated service delivery which draws upon contemporary international, national, and local research findings demonstrated to improve development outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. Projects can inform service innovation through systemic and policy reform.

The College for Learning and Development manages and delivers the **Child Safe Environments Train the Trainer Program** for appropriately screened organisation based and community people. This training develops major capacity for the community to implement aspects of the SA Governments' Child Safe Strategy and it is recommended for people involved (staff, volunteers etc) in all organisations that involve children (eg sport, arts, religion, education and recreation). The College maintains a register of current trainers for currency, quality, and referral purposes.

Tasmania

Tasmania is the final stages of establishing 10 **Child and Family Centres** which provide a range of education, health and family support services based on community identified need. (Two others have been funded with Australian Government funding). One education and care service has been built and another is under construction in rural communities in response to community need.

Victoria

Victoria acted as host jurisdiction for the new national quality legislation by passing the **Education and Care Service National Law Act 2010**, which other States and Territories subsequently adopted or passed corresponding legislation for.

Significant resources have been provided to the Victorian education and care sector to support the transition to the **National Quality Framework (NQF)**. These include written resources, a redesigned website, newsletters, information sessions and presentations and access to a central 1300 phone number for sector and public enquiries.

Victoria has also prepared a communications and key stakeholder engagement plan to ensure that Victorian education and care services and other key stakeholders are provided with timely, accurate and relevant information about the National Quality Framework. The particular circumstances of family day care, long day care, outside school hours care services and preschools (kindergartens) have each been considered.

Since 2009 Victoria has been implementing a comprehensive five-year plan to transform the Victorian kindergarten service system to enable a 15 hour kindergarten program to be implemented. Significant gains, including achieving all performance targets, have been made toward meeting the **National Partnership for Early Childhood Education** goals. The plan comprised actions in the following areas:

- ongoing and detailed planning in each local government area to respond to the unique needs of different local communities
- sustained direct assistance to services through workshops, consultancy and mentoring
- pilots and trials of 15 hour kindergarten programs in a range of settings to build practice experience and support other providers in managing the changes in their own services
- improving access for vulnerable children
- a sustained program to modernise infrastructure including new and upgraded facilities to enable the delivery of 15 hours of kindergarten
- increasing the number of qualified teachers and increasing the quality of service delivery.

Between October 2010 and June 2012 Victoria provided grants from state and national partnership funding to establish 15 **integrated children's centres** (combining kindergarten, playgroup, maternal and child health and other vital services for families), extend or upgrade over 80 centres across Victoria and provide IT and equipment funding for community-based kindergartens.

The 2011-12 State Budget included the following additional initiatives to support sustainable kindergarten provision:

- \$6 million to make kindergarten more affordable and accessible for families in small rural communities through **operational grants** of up to \$20,000 to around 87 small rural kindergartens
- \$14.2 million to continue and expand **kindergarten cluster management** to reduce the burden on parent-run committees, co-ordinate the use of infrastructure, support the workforce, and work in partnership with other bodies to provide more choice for families.

Western Australia

As part of implementing the **National Quality Framework for Education and Care Western Australia** has:

- Developed corresponding legislation and regulations
- Engaged in sector communication and education to prepare education and care services for transition to the National Quality Framework, and
- Established the Education and Care Regulatory Unit to undertake the broader role of regulating, quality assuring and supporting services required under the Framework.

The five **Children and Family Centres (CFC)** established in WA through the **National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development (NP IECD)** will offer a range of early childhood programs and services, including accredited childcare.

The services offered at each CFC will vary dependent on the capacity of existing service providers and community preferences and needs. The design and service delivery model for each CFC was developed through extensive community and service provider consultation to ensure culturally appropriate and nurturing programs and services, from a safe, welcoming and suitable environment. The Halls Creek CFC has been operational since February 2012 with the Fitzroy Valley CFC due to commence services from September 2012.

Mandatory reporting was introduced in Western Australia in 2009 and the culture of shared responsibility for the safety of all young children permeates the daily practices of all services across the early childhood development sector.

In 2011, Western Australia exceeded its agreed benchmarks for the NP ECE with 97.5 per cent of age-eligible children enrolled in kindergarten in the year before full-time schooling, including Indigenous children in remote localities. In 2012, over 75 per cent of all public, Catholic and independent schools are offering kindergarten for 15 hours per week; the balance are offering kindergarten for 11 hours and are set to increase to 15 hours in February 2013.

To ensure early childhood programs in schools are not only accessible but are also of high quality, the Department of Education engaged Professor Collette Tayler in 2010 to **Review educational practice in Kindergarten, Pre-primary and Year 1**. Key related to the need for clarity about evidence-based pedagogy, curriculum and assessment for children from birth to age 8. These findings gave rise to a statement being issued by the Director General of Education about The Early Years of Schooling. This has been followed by preparation of professional learning modules for school principals and early childhood educators working in public schools to support program improvements in line with the National Quality Standard and strong articulation between the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum.

The Agreement for **Early Learning and Care Centres** (ELCC's) has resulted in the provision of licensed childcare from dedicated childcare facilities at three public schools in WA. Through sponsorship provided by Woodside Energy, the capacity of the ELCC located in Karratha was expanded to accommodate 120 children, significantly addressing the significant unmet demand that existed in Karratha up to 2010.

Preschool is universally accessible through school sites in Western Australia and is free of compulsory charges at public schools. School survey data shows that the most prominent consideration in schools' decisions about the models of delivery used for their kindergarten programs are the preferences of families, including childcare needs and the capacities of local service providers. In addition, an increasing number of public, Catholic and independent schools are making school facilities available for the operation of Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services on school grounds.

NECDS REFORM PRIORITY 5 - Strengthen workforce across early childhood development and family support services

NECDS Outcome	Activity
<p>All outcomes</p>	<p><i>National Partnership on National Quality Agenda for ECEC</i></p> <p>On 1 January 2012, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (National Quality Framework – NQF) was established. It applies to most long day care, family day care, preschool (or kindergarten) and outside schools hours care services. The framework aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services.</p> <p>The National Quality Standard (NQS) is a key aspect of the National Quality Framework and sets a new national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. The National Quality Standard was informed by research about best practice and the way in which high quality education and care contributes to positive outcomes for children. It brings together the seven key quality areas that are important to outcomes for children: Educational program and practice; Children’s health and safety; Physical environment; Staffing arrangements; Relationships with children; Collaborative partnerships with families and communities; and Leadership and service management.</p> <p>Reforms under the National Quality Framework include improved educator to child ratios, improved qualification requirements for educators, and a new national quality assessment and rating process. The new nationally consistent educator-to-child ratios came into effect on 1 January 2012 for children aged birth to 24 months. The assessment and rating process began in January 2012 with services developing their Quality Improvement Plans and assessment and ratings visits commenced in June 2012.</p> <p><i>National Early Years Workforce Strategy</i></p> <p>The Australian Government has worked with states and territories to develop the Early Years Workforce Strategy, which focuses on the skills and attributes of high quality early childhood educators. The Strategy will be launched in September 2012 by the Chair of the Standing Council for School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC). The Strategy complements, and builds upon, existing Commonwealth, state and territory government measures aimed at improving the supply and quality of the early childhood education and care workforce. The Strategy provides the first commitment by all governments to an agreed vision and long-term framework for the early childhood education and care workforce. It will be used to develop immediate areas of action and longer term policy options.</p>

The Strategy is an important document which sets out for the first time how all Governments will support the early childhood education and care workforce to gain the skills needed to continue to provide Australian children with the best start to life. It reflects a commitment by governments to address the immediate priorities for the early childhood education and care workforce, while at the same time working towards a broader long-term strategy with a focus on supporting more integrated ways of working across the early childhood development sector.

The Commonwealth and each state and territory government has developed an implementation plan which outlines the steps that will be undertaken to support people to join the early education and care workforce and to get the qualifications and skills they need to support children from diverse backgrounds and with differing needs.

Included in the Australian Government's Implementation Plan are a number of initiatives aimed at supporting, training and retaining an experienced and qualified early childhood workforce:

- removing TAFE fees for diploma and advanced diploma courses in Children's Services
- expanding the existing early childhood education teachers **HECS-HELP** scheme which reduces by about half the HELP debt of early childhood teachers who choose to work in rural and remote areas, Indigenous communities and areas of high disadvantage
- providing an additional 1500 university places for early childhood teachers
- assisting experienced early childhood educators in rural and remote locations to have their skills and experience assessed through the **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** initiative.
- conducting a series of **Early Childhood Education and Care Industry Roundtables** to build relationships between local early childhood services and educators and other related stakeholders, such as employment service providers and training organisations, with a view to attracting more educators into the early childhood sector
- BBF Quality Measures – Workforce Element – **Child Care Services Training Projects**
- funding a project with the Hunter Institute of Mental Health to develop and promote mental health and wellbeing literacy for the ECEC sector
- conducting research into improving the engagement of Vocational Education and Training (VET) students in Children's Services Qualifications
- reviewing the Early Childhood Education and Care components of the **CHC08 Community Services Training Package**
- developing of targeted education materials to increase the awareness and understandings of general obligations under family assistance law
- providing Project Managers of the **Early Childhood Workforce Best Practice and Innovation Projects 2009** and 2010 with the opportunity to showcase their Projects at the 2012 Early Childhood Australia National Conference

National Early Childhood Development Symposium

The **National Symposium – Early childhood development: an emerging profession** will be held at the Hilton Adelaide in South Australia on 24 and 25 September 2012. The symposium is an exciting opportunity to be a part of the national discussion on the way forward to create a new integrated early childhood development (ECD) workforce in Australia, including moving towards:

- national commitment to co-creation of the emerging integrated ECD workforce
- a statement of values and principles for those working in ECD
- a blueprint for an ECD workforce strategy setting out the key next steps
- key messages to inform a communications strategy.

A series of eight online forums centred on weekly discussion topics have been held from 25 June to 17 August 2012, in the lead up to the Symposium. The outcomes from the online discussions will be collated into a number of publications that will form the basis for the discussions at the symposium.

Australian Capital Territory

The **National Quality Framework** is well established with the Assessment and Rating activity currently underway. The ACT is implementing the **Education and Care Workforce Strategy 2012 - 2014**. Senior staff will be attending the **National Early Childhood Development Symposium**.

New South Wales

The NSW Government **Early Childhood Teacher Cost Contribution Scheme** (ECTCCS) was established in 2011 to help offset part of the costs associated with the employment and professional development of early childhood teacher in all centre-based and mobile ECEC services, and to increase access to an early childhood program provided by an early childhood teacher to children who attend small services with less than 30 children. Under the Scheme a one-off amount was payable to every licensed centre-based or mobile service in NSW employing an early childhood teacher consistent with the numbers of the former *NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004* (i.e. up to four ECTs). The same funding contribution was payable for small, licensed centre-based or mobile services that were under the regulatory threshold requiring a teacher but employed an early childhood teacher anyway. Payments were made in the first half of 2012. In total, more than \$22 million was provided under this scheme to support the employment of degree qualified early childhood teachers at more than 2 000 eligible services.

The NSW Government is taking action to support educators gain the qualifications they need under the **National Quality Framework** through its **New Skills: Quality Care** strategy. This strategy includes:

- a recognition of prior learning self-assessment tool and sector guide, available free to individuals and registered training organisations;

- subsidised training in Certificate III and Diploma of Children’s Services for people already working in early childhood education and care services; and subsidised literacy training, if needed, to help with studying for a qualification.

Northern Territory

The **NT Early Childhood Workforce Plan** which will support the **Early Years Workforce Strategy**, was launched in 2011.

Components of the plan include the *NT More Early Childhood Teacher* scholarship and the **Building the Remote Early Childhood Workforce** pilot program. The NT More Early Childhood Teacher scholarship:

- provides funding for the upgrading of existing qualifications to four year teaching qualifications for teachers in preschools and educators in long day care services
- this funding is available for 2012 – 2016
- provides long day care educators and qualified teachers with a range of part-time, flexible delivery study options through Charles Darwin University
- has awarded 82 scholarships to date, 8 to indigenous educators.

The Building the Remote Early Childhood Workforce pilot program:

- provides VET level certificate training in Community Services and Children’s Services
- provides support to senior school students in VET in Schools and community members
- has been running from 2011, and has now extended to four remote communities.

Queensland

Queensland contributed to the development of the National Early Years Workforce Strategy. Queensland’s **Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan (2011-14)** is Queensland’s implementation plan against the National Strategy. It includes initiatives such as:

- early childhood teacher scholarships
- incentives for rural and remote teachers
- fee waivers for TAFE children’s services courses
- RPL package for carers, targeted for areas of need; and
- supporting a pathway for existing Advanced Diploma qualified staff to attain teaching qualifications.

Queensland continues to provide support and communications to the ECEC sector to progressively implement the **National Quality Framework** and negotiated transitional arrangements in the National Regulations.

South Australia

Building capacity in early childhood educators and leaders has been a Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) focus in the implementation of the NQF, through collaborative work with regions across the state in Early Childhood Leadership Development (including Catholic and Independent sectors), professional learning, and the development of on-line resources. DECD is funding the Health and Community Services Skills Board to coordinate and develop a workforce development strategy for the Early Childhood Education and Care sector to promote planning and action to achieve workforce requirements of the **National Quality Agenda**.

127 early childhood teachers working in DECD preschools and the early years of school have been supported to upgrade their qualifications to four year status through the provision of scholarships funded through **the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education**. To date 33 scholarship recipients have graduated from the University of South Australia with a Bachelor of Education (In-service).

80 scholarships have been made available to teachers who are working in non-government child care centres and preschools. As of 10 August 2012, 36 teachers have been award scholarships of \$5 000 each to up-grade their qualifications to a four year early childhood degree.

Tasmania

Tasmania is developing an additional initiative to build on the very successful **Skills Recognition project** which trained experienced educators as workplace coaches and assessors. **Family Partnership Training** is being supported as a key tool for working with families in all early childhood development settings. Funding continues for scholarships for educators and mentoring support for education and care services.

Victoria

Victoria has continued to implement its comprehensive 2009 Workforce Strategy **Improving Victoria's Early Childhood Workforce**, which aims to achieve a highly skilled, professional early childhood workforce that supports the health, learning and development of all Victorian children.

As part of this Strategy, Victoria has provided over 1,000 scholarships through a new **Early Childhood Qualifications Fund** for current professionals working in education and care services seeking to upgrade or attain an early childhood qualification, new Employment Incentives for over 130 hard-to-staff early childhood education vacancies, as well as scholarships for the Early Childhood Intervention workforce.

Other initiatives included the development and provision of leadership courses for early childhood professionals, a mentoring program for early childhood teachers and a pilot program promoting early childhood teaching careers to students undertaking dual primary/early childhood teaching degrees.

The existing **Maternal and Child Health Nursing Scholarships** program was also expanded to provide an additional 50 postgraduate scholarships.

Western Australia

In 2010 Western Australia offered state-funded scholarships to 77 preschool education assistants in public schools to acquire a **Certificate III in Education Support** via a recognition of prior learning process with Meerilinga, a local Registered Training Organisation.

Through the **Regional Community Child Care Development Fund**, Western Australia has allocated funding for the period 2011-2014 to assist regional child care services, including support to access training and development for their staff.

WA is a member of the steering committee organising the **National Early Childhood Development Symposium**.

WA's implementation in 2011-12 of the **Remote Indigenous Professional Learning Project** will broaden the knowledge and use of the **Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)** among Indigenous educators working with young children in schools and children's services in regional and remote communities. The project trains locally employed teachers from education and care to mentor Indigenous educators in their own workplaces to understand, interpret and implement the EYLF. The localised nature of teacher-mentors will have a lasting effect in communities, engendering long-term professional collaboration and networks.

In 2011, key government and non-government agencies collaborated with **Child Australia** to plan and conduct the Western Australian Early Childhood Education and Care Conference. The conference attracted over 500 local, national and international delegates and hosted world renowned international speakers including Dr Stuart Shanker from Canada and Dr Wendy Lee from New Zealand.

In Western Australia, the 2009 and 2012 data collections for the **Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)** have profiled approximately 99 per cent of the expected cohort. The AEDI data are used in combination with other local and state-level data sets to shape early childhood initiatives, for example the establishment of ten **Child and Parent Centres**, the expansion of community child health services and implementation of WA's **AEDI Local Champions Program** which helps communities with high levels of vulnerability to implement local actions designed to strengthen families, communities, services and programs. Ongoing consultation and support is also provided to government, local government and non-government agencies, including nearly 30 *Early Years Networks*, to understand and use the AEDI results to inform local initiatives.

AEDI data collected in 2009 contributed to the Western Australian Commissioner for Children's **The State of Western Australia's Children and Young People** report which provides a picture of how Western Australian children are faring.

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NECDS REFORM PRIORITY 6 - Build better information and a solid evidence base

NECDS Outcome	Activity
<p>All outcomes</p>	<p><i>National Information Agreement for Early Childhood Education and Care (NA ECE)</i></p> <p>Under the NIA ECEC, the objective to build better information and a solid evidence base has been supported through the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data linkage through projects including the ‘National Early Childhood Development Dataset’ which will make data available for ECD research, encourage collaborative interactions with key researchers and institutions, as well as set up infrastructure to support the development of ECD and outcomes research capacity at national, jurisdictional and regional levels. • Data analysis on aspects such as access to early childhood education, and cost and affordability, which investigate factors that predict participation in early childhood learning. • 2011-12 funding for the Headline Indicators for Children's Health, Development and Wellbeing, which reports against a set of health, education and early childhood development-related indicators based on extensive investigation • Work to improve national data standards in ECEC, and data on Indigenous early childhood development. <p><i>Australian Early Development Index</i></p> <p>The 2012 Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) national implementation is being led by the Australian Government (through DEEWR), in close partnership with state and territory jurisdictions and contracted agencies who deliver key aspects of the AEDI. The 2012 AEDI data collection occurred from 1 May to mid August 2012, with DEEWR working closely with AEDI coordinators in each state/territory to achieve agreed completion rates. Data from the 2012 collection is scheduled for release in March 2013, with results publicly available for approximately 95 per cent of Australian communities. These results will be provided through a national report, online community maps, community profiles and participating schools will receive their own school profile.</p> <p>The 2012 AEDI national implementation includes \$3 million funding for AEDI focussed research to supports the expectation that the AEDI results will increasingly be used to inform government policy and program management. A set of 10 research projects are being funded at this time – a mix of short term and longer term projects that include investigating the relationship between the AEDI and mental health predictors/outcomes; as well as analysis of the social and emotional development and wellbeing of young children (including jurisdictional differences).</p>

AEDI data is also available for other research purposes including data linkage. DEEWR is working with authorities in each jurisdiction to establish agreements to facilitate the linkage of AEDI data with other datasets. An agreement is in place with SA/NT data link, with other jurisdictions expected to follow in due course. Data linkage projects currently being scoped include linkage of AEDI data to NAPLAN to help identify whether the AEDI has any predictive value in terms of children's later progress at school and linkage of AEDI data with the Longitudinal Study for Australian Children (LSAC). Also, the 2012 collection cycle aligns with the ABS Census cycle offering a unique window of opportunity for critical data linkage to occur.

National Early Childhood Development Outcomes Framework

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) was contracted by DEEWR on behalf of all jurisdictions to provide advice on an indicator-based reporting framework to enable development of the evidence base for monitoring of outcomes relating to the National Early Childhood Development Strategy. The AIHW completed an extensive review of existing national and international reporting on ECD, undertook targeted consultations with experts in ECD, and completed their analysis on a refined list of proposed indicators which received a high level of support through the consultation process as the most suitable indicators for an ECD outcomes-based framework for future development. This work was published in July 2011. Further information is available at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737419493>.

Further work to develop data sources and specifications for the proposed ECD outcome measures will take place in 2012-13.

National Workforce Census

Results from the 2010 ECEC Workforce Census were released in 2011. Work is currently underway in preparing a second census, which the Australian Government will conduct in 2013.

Australian Capital Territory

The **Australian Early Development Index** AEDI is strongly supported within the ACT. The ACT has recently completed data collection for the 2012 cycle with 100 per cent of schools in the ACT participating. This demonstrates a strong commitment to the data collection and the utility of the AEDI. A subgroup of the ACT Children and Young Peoples Taskforce continues to meet and actively coordinate the use of the AEDI and other national strategies/activities in government planning.

New South Wales

The Department of Education and Communities has continued to refine the online data collection tool for government funded community preschools and the data elements collected to ensure that data collection appropriately supports the needs of services, the Department, and national reporting requirements.

The Department has also undertaken significant work to develop an online census collection tool for government schools. From 2010, unique student identifiers, known as the **Enrolment Registration Number** (ERN), have been used for all

enrolments in government schools, including government preschools. Information is harvested from ERN in preparation for the annual preschool census to ensure accuracy of data and reduction of administrative requirements for schools in completing the preschool census.

Northern Territory

The 2012 **Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)** data collection occurred between May and June 2012. 100 per cent of schools participated in data collection through the application of the **2012 AEDI Implementation Framework** consisting of; AEDI coordination network, provision of relief teachers, communication strategy and pre-population of demographic data. All schools were supported throughout the data collection process to minimise disruption and maximise data quality.

The **Centre for Child Development and Education** was established in 2011 at the Menzies School of Health Research as an institute committed to providing leadership and driving change that improves children's lives through better health, education and wellbeing, particularly Indigenous children, through policy and practice reforms in child health, child care, education, family support and child protection.

To support the **National Quality Framework (NQF)**, communication and information dissemination strategies for internal and external stakeholders to support the transition arrangements were implemented, including the establishment of the Key Stakeholder Advisory Group. There was also continued involvement in national working groups to further the implementation of the NQF.

Queensland

Queensland continues to use the **Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)** to support policy development and convene the **AEDI Coordinating Committee** to advise on matters of AEDI implementation. Queensland's AEDI Coordinator supports communities and agencies to understand and use the results in planning, policy development and service delivery. More than 95 per cent participation was achieved in the 2012 AEDI collection..

Queensland is using the AEDI to inform policy development across agencies, supported by the AEDI Coordinating Committee.

Queensland submitted its 2011 **National Partnership on Early Childhood Education** annual report and data exception report and is working with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to improve data quality to meet requirements of the **National Minimum Data Set (NMDS)**. It is also contributing to the annual review of the NMDS and development of proposed indicators for the *National Outcomes Measures for Early Childhood Development*, through the Early Childhood Data Sub-Group. It is implementing an information management program and systems to better support national minimum data reporting requirements.

Queensland is also participating in **E4Kids**, a five- year longitudinal study of outcomes of different models of early childhood education and care.

South Australia

Under the **National Information Agreement for Early Childhood Education and Care**, to improve the quality and availability of data required for reporting, analysis, and program evaluation purposes, a new preschool administration system has been developed and implemented in all Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) preschools.. It provides the facility for DECD preschools to submit data required for the Annual Census of Children’s Services (ACCS) that complies with the Early Childhood Education and Care: Unit Record Level National Minimum Data Set (ECEC NMDS) data elements.

The **Education and Learning Visual Information System (ELVIS)** data analysis tool is being distributed to all local councils and non-government child development services providers. The ELVIS tool gives users access to over 30 key data sets on a wide range of topics including the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI), NAPLAN, participation in education, employment status, juvenile justice, child protection data and population projections. ELVIS sources, configures, and regularly updates multiple data sets. ELVIS allows users to generate their own detailed analysis, reports, charts and graphs and maps using easy to use menus.

Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) is being piloted nationally in South Australia during 2012/13. The goal of the MDI project is to understand how children think and feel about their lives both inside and outside of school during the middle childhood years. The questions measure five areas of development and well-being: (1) social and emotional development; (2) connectedness; (3) school experiences; (4) physical health and well-being; and (5) constructive use of time.

Under the Australian Early Development Index, South Australia is working closely with other jurisdictions, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to explore how early childhood development data can be used to describe the trajectories of vulnerable children and identify what makes a difference. Arrangements for the AEDI to be linked with a range of health and education data have been successful and data is currently being provided for analysis.

Across South Australia community engagement has led to the involvement of local communities in making decisions that best meet the needs of their children and families. Documentation of this local work is available in print and online which has supported other communities to engage with AEDI and other data sources to plan for the best outcomes at the local level.

SA has exceeding the 95 per cent data capture required to ensure validity and reliability of the next data release in March 2013.

To support the **National Workforce Census**, South Australia has implemented a process in 2012 to identify, verify and store qualification data for all Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) preschool staff that have primary contact with children. The E-recruitment system that DECD introduced in 2008 obtains a copy of teacher's transcripts and/or parchment at the time of recruitment.

The **Department for Communities and Social Inclusion Research Unit** is:

- undertaking a study to explore the impact of abuse and neglect on child development. The study will use data-linkage techniques and de-identified data from a range of administrative data sets (to examine developmental outcomes for children who have experienced abuse and neglect, in comparison with others in the population. This project is the first of its kind in Australia and has national and international significance. The study will be completed in late 2012.
- currently developing a research study recognising that children with a disability are at greater risk of abuse and neglect, relinquishment by their families, and placement in out of home care. Whilst it is recognised that these children need support and assistance, there is little documented as to the issues that precipitate family breakdown, early intervention opportunities, and the kinds of supports and services that can improve coping skills and reduce stress.

Tasmania

Tasmania is carrying out a longitudinal study on student outcomes for those who participated in Launching into Learning programs prior to school. Student outcomes are measured through the **Kindergarten Development Check and Performance Indicators in Primary School** (PIPS). Staff are participating in the Data Linkage initiative with South Australia.

Victoria

Victoria undertook a range of activities to support communities to turn their data into action, including presenting **Australian Early Development Index** findings and complementary data sets to communities in the **Visualising the Evidence' Mapping Series** and assisting in developing early childhood and community stakeholder networks to ensure a coordinated approach to service delivery. It also provided case studies from communities who are successfully linking data with planning strategies as models of good practice.

Western Australia

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