



COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION

DISCUSSION PAPER CGC 2002/45

WELFARE PART 2: FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION

1. This paper sets out the issues raised by the States in relation to the Family and Child Services assessment for the 2004 Review. It provides the preliminary views of Commission staff on how these might be resolved.

2. The Family and Child Services category comprises expenses for welfare services which support families and children. More specifically, the category covers: children's services; institutions for children and adolescents; children's boarding homes, hostels, and residential nurseries; youth refuges; child day care centres; crèches and play centres. It also includes expenses on child protective services, occasional care, foster care and other services to support children, youth and their families.

3. The standard expenditure in 2000-01 was \$83.08 per capita or 1.74 per cent of total gross standard expenses. Compared to an equal per capita assessment, the 2002 Update Family and Child Services assessment redistributed \$73.5 million away from New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT to Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

1999 REVIEW ASSESSMENT APPROACH

4. In the 1999 Review, this category was made up of five components:

- (i) scale-affected expenditure;
- (ii) juvenile detention;
- (iii) residential care/other services;
- (iv) children services; and
- (v) isolation.

5. The components, weights and factors used in the assessment are shown in Table 1.

6. Revenue for this category, which was relatively minor and consisted of miscellaneous fees and charges, was assessed by the equal per capita method.

Table 1 1999 REVIEW ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

Expenditure Component	Component weight %	Factors	Basis of calculation
Scale-affected expenditure	2.42	Administrative scale	General method.
		Input costs	General method with weights of 80% for wages, 2% for accommodation and 1% for electricity.
Juvenile detention	19.48	Socio-demographic composition	Derived by applying weights to population sub-sets for age, Aboriginality, low English fluency, remote indigenous and low income status.
		Dispersion	General method.
		Input costs	General method with weights of 70% for wages, 2% for accommodation and 1% for electricity.
		Cross-border	Assessed for New South Wales and the ACT by the general method.
Residential care / other services	69.92	Socio-demographic composition	Derived by applying weights to population sub-sets for age, Aboriginality, low English fluency, remote indigenous and low-income status.
		Dispersion	General method.
		Input costs	General method with weights of 70% for wages, 2% for accommodation and 1% for electricity.
Children's services	7.99	Socio-demographic composition	Based on proportion of the population aged 0-12 years.
		Dispersion	General method.
		Input costs	General method with weights of 70% for wages, 2% for accommodation and 1% for electricity.
		Cross-border	Assessed for New South Wales and the ACT by the general method.
Isolation	0.19	Isolation	General method.

2004 REVIEW ASSESSMENT

7. Attachment A provides a brief summary of States' service provision responsibilities included in this category and changes in individual States' policies since the 1999 Review.

Scope of the Category

8. ***Reallocation of juvenile detention.*** In Discussion Paper CGC 2001/12, *Scope and Structure of the Standard Budget*, the Commission proposed a reallocation of juvenile detention expenses to the Corrective Service category. This change was proposed so that the assessment category structure would better match the GFS classification.

9. The Northern Territory supported the transfer of the juvenile detention component to Corrective Services as long as disabilities associated with juvenile detention continued to be assessed — in particular, that the socio-demographic weights continued to be applied and component weights in Corrective Services were recalculated.

10. In Discussion Paper CGC 2002/3 *Scope and Structure of the Equalisation Budget*, the Commission confirmed that State expenditure on juvenile detention services would be included in the Corrective Services category.

Assessment Structure

11. New South Wales argued that the Commission's assessment structure for Family and Child Services did not fit the program structure used by community services agencies. It described its approach to delivering community services as being based on a 'continuum of care' model which classified the activities and expenditure according to the degree of intervention. It said that the Commission should revise its framework to better reflect the New South Wales community services program structure and needs.

12. ***Discussion.*** In the 1999 Review, the three components of family and children services were defined as:

- (i) Juvenile Detention – now in the Corrective Services category;
- (ii) Residential Care and Other Services – covering all services (other than juvenile and children services) provided to children and families, including early intervention and residential services, child protection, out-of-home care and adoption services; and
- (iii) Children's Services – covering the provision and subsidisation of child care services.

13. Commission staff consider that the 1999 Review structure represented a 'continuum of care', with juvenile detention being the highest level of intervention and child care being the lowest.

14. We think it is important to distinguish between childcare and other services which provide varying degrees of intervention. Although childcare expenses represented only about 6 per cent of the total family and child services expenses in 1999-2000 (see Attachment A), the nature and cost of these services are quite different from the intervention services.

15. New South Wales is asking for a disaggregation of the services included in the Residential Care and Other Services component so that more accurate demand and cost weights can be applied to the relevant population groups, and the assessment becomes more transparent.

16. Staff intend to recommend that the 'Residential Care and Other Services' component be, renamed 'Child and Youth Support Services' to make clear that it covers a range of activities designed to support children — not just those in residential care. Staff are not inclined to recommend further disaggregation of the category unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the cost and demand weights applied to the target population are producing the wrong results and the extra complexity that further disaggregation would introduce into the assessment could be justified. In 2000-01, this component was just over one per cent of total standard expenses.

17. Staff intend to recommend that a separate component be retained for expenditure on child care and that its title be changed from Children's Services to Child Care.

ASSESSMENT ISSUES

18. This section discusses the range of disability factors required in each component and how they should be measured. General issues concerning the common factors, on which there were no issues raised in relation to this category, are covered in the separate discussion papers:

- (i) CGC 2002/20, *Input Costs*;
- (ii) CGC 2002/22, *Dispersion*;
- (iii) CGC 2000/23, *Administrative Scale Factor*; and
- (iv) CGC 2002/5, *Cross Border Disabilities and Special Circumstances of the Australian Capital Territory*.

Scale Affected Expenditure

19. In the 1999 Review, administrative scale and input costs factors were assessed for this component. Staff intend to recommend no change.

Child and Youth Support Services

20. The child and youth support services component covers services provided to support children, youths and families at risk and in need of protection. In particular, it covers child protection services, out-of-home care (including residential care) and adoption services.

Range of Factors

21. The factors assessed in the 1999 Review were dispersion, input costs and socio-demographic composition.

22. Tasmania argued that an economic environment factor should be included to reflect the relative levels of activity of philanthropic agencies in the States. However, it recognised that data to measure the extent to which expenditure by these agencies relieved the States of the need to provide welfare services would be difficult to obtain and judgement might be required.

23. In previous reviews (1993 and 1999) the Commission decided that it would be more appropriate to measure the impact of inherent differences between the States. It did not include an economic environment factor for this category (to take account of different levels of private sector activity) because of the difficulty in measuring:

- (i) the government policy influences on the levels of non-State provision;
and
- (ii) the combined effects of low household incomes, population distribution, economic climate and the number of small businesses on the provision of family and child welfare services in each State.

24. Because these difficulties remain, staff intend to recommend that the same range of factors used in the 1999 Review be continued for the 2004 Review for this component, and that no economic environment factor be assessed.

Socio-demographic Composition

25. In the 1999 Review, the socio-demographic composition factor took account of the cost and use of these services by different population groups. The target population for this component was defined as those aged 0-17 years, divided into the age ranges 0-14 years and 15-17 years. Different weights were applied to each of the population sub-groups.

- (i) A weight of 1.75 was applied to the 0-14 age band and a weight of 1 to 15 to 17 age band, based on child abuse and neglect data obtained from the AIHW report: *Australia's Welfare 1997*.
- (ii) A weight of 1.4 was applied to the Indigenous population aged 0-17.
- (iii) A weight of 4 was applied to the population aged 0-17 living in families with annual income of \$26 000 or less, and a weight of one was applied to people aged 0-17 living in families with incomes above \$26 000.
- (iv) A weight of 1.5 was applied to persons aged 0-17 of non-English speaking background and who spoke English 'not well' or 'not at all'.
- (v) An additional weight of 1.5 was applied to the Indigenous people aged 0-17 living in remote areas (areas defined as 'remote centres' and 'other remote' in the RRMA classification).

26. The weights applied were all use weights, except for the low English fluency one which reflected higher cost associated with providing services to those people.

27. The main issues raised by the States were:

- (i) the need to revise the weight assigned to low income status;
- (ii) using SEIFA or an alternative purpose-built index as an indicator of demand, rather than income status; and
- (iii) the need to revise the weight assigned to the 0-14 age group.

28. **Low income status.** Victoria argued that the weight of four applied in the 1999 Review for people with low-income status overestimated the need of this population group. Based on its Department of Human Services (DHS) data on clients in care, it said that the actual level of use by this sub-population was about 2.5 times that of other users.

29. Staff seek information from other States similar to that provided by Victoria so that the appropriateness of the weight of four can be evaluated.

30. **Alternative measures.** Tasmania considered the ABS SEIFA would be a better indicator than income status. It said that SEIFA would more comprehensively reflect the range of influences on the demand and cost of welfare services because these indexes combine a number of factors that define the relative socio-economic status of each State's population.

31. New South Wales suggested that the Commission should use a purpose built index along the lines of the socio-economic index of relative disadvantage specifically developed by the ABS for use by the New South Wales Department of Community Services in its Resource Allocation Model (RAM). The ABS constructed the special index (a variation of SEIFA) using variables chosen by New South Wales, based on its experience of providing child welfare services. The variables were:

- (i) 'percentage of dependent children aged 0-17 in households with dependent children aged 0-17 years;
- (ii) families in poverty;
- (iii) households with no motor car;
- (iv) households with a parent who never went to school;
- (v) households which are one parent families; and
- (vi) households containing offspring aged 0-17 years with 2 or more families'¹.

32. **Discussion.** Discussion Paper CGC 2002/21 *Socio-Demographic Composition* explained that Commission staff do not consider SEIFA to be the most appropriate measure of socio-economic status for the Commission's assessments. SEIFA, as carefully constructed summary indicators of socio-economic status encompassing a number of apparently relevant variables, might appear tailor-made for the Commission's purposes. However, there are some telling reasons why SEIFA are generally not the most appropriate measures for the Commission's assessments.

- (i) Data which link service use and cost to SEIFA values are not as frequently available as data which link use and cost to specific population characteristics.
- (ii) SEIFA are area-based (rather than people-based) which makes them inconsistent with other socio-demographic data used in assessments.
- (iii) SEIFA ranks areas but there is no simple way to relate intervals in this ranking to degrees of demand for government services.
- (iv) If SEIFA were used along with other variables such as age-sex, Indigeneity and place of residence, careful and possibly complex adjustments would need to be made to the measurement of those variables to avoid double counting. The ABS does not publish the comprehensive information about the construction of the indexes which might be needed if such adjustments were to be accurately calculated.

33. A SEIFA specifically designed for child welfare services partially addresses the first issue although the link between service use and the variables chosen for inclusion in the measure appears to be based on judgement rather than empirical analysis. The other issues are intrinsic to using SEIFA-style measures in the Commission's assessments. Using the purpose-built SEIFA would also make it difficult to integrate additional weights for Indigenous people in remote areas and people with low English fluency into the assessment. Staff consider that having a purpose-built ABS index for each State would only be justified

¹ New South Wales Main Submission May 2002, Attachment B, p246.

if the case for including such an index were strong and there were no viable alternatives. We are inclined not to pursue this option but seek views on this proposal.

34. The Discussion Paper 2002/21 *Socio-Demographic Composition* also said that using income status as a proxy for socio-economic status had the advantages that:

- (i) it was a clear, easily defined and widely recognised measure of socio-economic status;
- (ii) it was strongly correlated with 'poverty' and schooling achievements;
- (iii) it was consistent with the use of other Census based data such as age, Indigeneity and place of residence and, more generally, with the broad approach the Commission had taken for assessing socio-demographic composition disabilities;
- (iv) the number of people with low income could be derived from the Census and cross-tabulated with other characteristics; and
- (v) the influence of income status could be separated from the influences of age-sex, Indigeneity and place of residence (avoiding double counting).

35. Staff intend to recommend that the approach taken for socio-economic status assessments in 1999 be retained for the 2004 Review.

36. ***Weight for the 0-14 age group.*** Victoria opposed the additional cost weight of 1.75 applied for children aged 0-14. Its data showed that the number of children in out-of-home care (per thousand children) was greater for children aged 15-17 years than for the 0-14 age group.

37. ***Discussion.*** In the previous review, a higher use weight was applied for children aged 0-14 years because of the higher rate of abuse and neglect notifications for this age group. Table 2 details the rates per 1 000 children 0-17 years in substantiated notifications of abuse and neglect in 1995-96.

Table 2 RATES OF SUBSTANTIATED NOTIFICATIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT, 1995-96

Age group	Physical abuse	Emotional abuse	Sexual abuse	Neglect	Total (0-14)	Weight with 15-17 age band set to 1
Rates per 1000 persons aged						
0-4	1.5	2.3	0.5	2.0	6.3	1.85
5-9	1.6	1.7	1.1	1.3	5.7	1.68
10-14	2.1	1.7	1.4	1.0	6.2	1.82
Weights for 0-14(a)						1.75
15-17	1.3	0.8	0.9	0.4	3.4	1.00

(a) Weight for 0-14 years was calculated by averaging the weights for age bands 0-14 and was rounded to 1.75.

Source: AIHW, *Australia's Welfare 97*, Table 6.3, p 199.

38. Victoria used the rate of out-of-home care by the age groups 0-14 and 15-17 years, whereas the Commission's calculation was based on a broader measure of the rate of substantiated notifications of child abuse and neglect, obtained from the AIHW Report *Australia's Welfare 1997*.

39. Staff consider that use of out-of-home care is not a suitable summary indicator of demand for the range of services covered by this Child and Youth Support component. Notifications of child abuse and neglect give an indication of the cause of the various types of intervention States undertake. For this reason, staff intend to recommend that the 1999 approach be retained for measuring the age specific use weights. Since the latest edition of *Australia's Welfare* does not include more recent data on the rate of child abuse and neglect by age bands, we ask States to provide up to date data.

Child Care

40. The child care component includes the provision and subsidisation of child care services for children aged 0-12 years. While the Commonwealth is the main funder of child care services, the States are also involved in funding (and sometimes providing) home and community based long day care centres, occasional care, play schools and outside school hours care.

Range of Factors

41. In the 1999 Review, the factors assessed for this component were dispersion, input costs, socio-demographic composition and cross-border.

42. Staff intend to recommend that the same range of factors be assessed for the 2004 Review.

Socio-demographic Composition

43. In the 1999 Review, the socio-demographic composition factor was based on the population aged 0-12 years.

44. States expressed concern about measuring socio-demographic composition influences by using the 0-12 year old population as a whole. They indicated that their expenses were also influenced by the demand and costs of providing child care services to different population sub-groups. The issues raised were:

- (i) that single-parent family status would be a better measure of demand for these services;
- (ii) the introduction of a weighting for people with language and cultural differences, and;
- (iii) the use of SEIFA index as the measure of demand.

45. ***Sole-parent status.*** Victoria argued that single-parent status was a more reliable measure of demand for child care than low-income status because sole parents were more likely to have low incomes and thus be financially stressed; more likely to suffer from social isolation; and have less support from immediate family. Victoria presented data, which showed that 65 per cent of all clients receiving Commonwealth income support came from single parent families. It said that the number of sole parent families would be a better measure of the need for children's services and that a cost weight of 2 should be applied.

46. ***Discussion.*** Staff will investigate whether a socio-economic element should be introduced into this assessment. Table 3 shows that sole parent families are over-representation in Commonwealth income support, but that this may be the result of their over-representation in low-income population.

Table 3 SOLE PARENT FAMILIES USE OF CHILD CARE SERVICES AND GOVERNMENT INCOME SUPPORT 2000-01

Sole parent family (SPF)	Per cent
Proportion of sole parent families with children under 14 years of age	21.0
Proportion of children using child care services who are from sole parent families	28.2
Sole parent families with a gross weekly income of less than \$500	67.2
Sole parent families with a gross weekly income of over \$500	39.0
Sole parent families in receipt of government income support	64.3

Source: *Report on Government Services 2002*, Table 14.3, p 769, *Australia's Welfare 2001*, Table 5.2, 5.12, p 144 and 165. ABS: Income Distribution, 6253.0, Table 14 and 16.

47. Table 3 shows that in 2000-01, sole parent families represented 21 per cent of all families with children aged under 14 years and that 28 per cent of the children in child care services came from sole parent families. Over 67 per cent of sole parent families had an average gross weekly income of less than \$500 and most (over 64 per cent) were recipients of government income support.

48. Both sole parent and low income could be included in the assessment although care would need to be taken to avoid double counting because of the strong correlation between the two variables.

49. If staff investigations show that a socio-economic element is justified, we will recommend that the assessment be based on low income status because it is a broader measure of demand for child care than number of sole parent families. However, what is not clear to Commission staff is the primary role of the States in child care services. If States have responsibility for providing subsidies or services directly, then a socio-economic disability could be important. If the main role of the States is to licence, regulate and maintain standards of child care, rather than providing operating subsidies, then a size of industry factor would be more relevant. If States primarily provide capital grants, a more appropriate assessment would be a factor based only on Australian average numbers of child care users, with cost weights applied to different age groups (if capital use were shown to be more extensive for some ages than for others — for example, for those in full-time care, 0-5 years).

50. **NESB weight.** New South Wales argued that no weight was applied for low English fluency for children's services in the 1999 Review assessment, and that a NESB weight would be relevant for this component. It made the case that agencies involved with children's services needed to develop and provide culturally appropriate services when caring for children with different language and cultural backgrounds — this increased the costs of service delivery and needs to be addressed in the assessments.

51. **Discussion.** As stated in Discussion Paper CGC 2002/21 *Socio-Demographic Composition*, the Commission accepts that States can experience differences in demand and unit cost in providing services:

- (i) to population groups with low English fluency — because of the need for interpreters and the extra time taken in providing the service;
- (ii) to culturally diverse populations because:
 - developing culturally appropriate services and ensuring access to them as well as to mainstream services costs more per client than the standard service; and
 - special programs are needed to deal with the alienation experienced by some CALD groups — for example, to manage behaviour in schools or deal with gang-based crime.

The questions are which of these influences are relevant to the services provided under this category and how could they be measured.

52. Table 4 shows that, across the States, representation of children from non-English speaking backgrounds in Commonwealth approved child care services in 1999-2000 was greater than their overall representation in the community. It indicates a use weight of 1.25 for NESB children, although this would need to be adjusted for the effects of income status on demand to get a true picture of the demand due to NESB status.

Table 4 CHILDREN FROM A NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND ATTENDING COMMONWEALTH APPROVED CHILD CARE SERVICES^(a), 1999-2000.

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Attendees of child care services from NESB	15.3	12.2	6.2	7.7	6.0	2.2	10.6	7.5	10.7
Representation of NESB children in the community	11.5	11.0	4.0	4.7	6.1	0.9	9.5	5.7	8.5

(a) Children living in situations where the main language spoken is not English.

Source: *Report on Government Services 2001*, Vol 2, Table 14A.16.

53. Commonwealth and State governments fund special child care programs and services for children with additional needs, and provide culturally and developmentally appropriate services for children between the ages of 0 and 12 years. The priority groups for the program are children from minority cultural backgrounds, children with a disability and children from Indigenous background.

Table 5 CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL CHILDREN USING CHILD CARE, 1996-97^(a)

Type of service	Child with disability	Parent with disability	Child at risk of abuse and neglect	Indigenous Origin	Non-English speaking background	Total children attending
	%	%	%	%	%	no.
Long day care centre	1.8	0.8	0.4	1.3	12.6	294 702
Family day care	2.9	0.4	0.4	1.0	7.3	84 971
Before/after school care	1.9	0.2	0.1	0.9	11.0	99 518
Vacation care	2.3	0.2	0.2	1.1	7.0	30 972
Occasional care ^(b)	2.2	1.3	1.2	3.3	13.5	26 588
Multifunctional children's services	2.5	0.1	0.4	7.1	1.4	1 020
MACS ^(c)	4.8	0.8	1.5	78.0	1.5	1 715

(a) Commonwealth funded.

(b) Including neighbourhood model occasional care.

(c) Multifunctional Aboriginal Children Services.

Source: AIHW, *Australia's Welfare 1999*, Table 4.13, p 115.

54. Table 5 shows the proportion of children with additional needs, based on Commonwealth funded childcare services. It shows that the children from a NESB background had higher rates of use for almost all types of services (except for

Multifunctional children's services and MACS) compared with other groups of children who access these services.

55. Unfortunately, there were no similar data available on the number of children from NESB groups who access State funded child care services. Staff are also uncertain about the additional services that States provide to NESB children. We seek information from States about the representation of NESB children in State provided child care services and any services that are specifically designed to meet the needs of those children.

56. Following the receipt of information from States, staff will consider whether an additional use or cost weight needs to be introduced into the socio-demographic composition factor for the child care component. One consideration will be the materiality of the change given the small relative size of this category.

57. **ABS SIEFA.** Tasmania considered the ABS SEIFA would be a better indicator than income status. It said that SEIFA would more comprehensively reflect the range of influences on the demand and cost of welfare services because these indexes combine a number of factors that define the relative socio-economic status of each State's population.

58. **Discussion.** This issue is discussed above under the child and youth support services component. Consistent with the conclusion of that discussion, staff intend to recommend that SEIFA not be used as the measure of socio-economic status.

User Charges

59. User Charges are very small when compared with total expenses for this category. No issues were raised by the States concerning the present treatment of this item. Staff intend to recommend that the revenue for this category continue to be treated by the equal per capita method as in previous Review.

CONCLUSIONS

60. A summary of the assessment proposed for the 2004 Review is shown in Table 6. The component weights shown in the table are indicative only.

Table 6 FAMILY AND CHILD WELFARE — PROPOSED ASSESSMENT, 2004 REVIEW

Component	Component weight %	Factors	Basis of calculation
Scale-affected expenditure	2.42	Administrative scale	General method.
		Input costs	General method.
Children and Youth Support Services (CAYSS)	91.39	Socio-demographic composition	Derived by applying weights to population sub-sets for age, Aboriginality, low English fluency, remote indigenous and low-income status.
		Dispersion	General method.
		Input costs	General method
Child Care	6.0	Socio-demographic composition	Based on proportion of the population aged 0-12 years (possible inclusion of weight for children in low income families and children from NESB).
		Dispersion	General method.
		Input costs	General method
		Cross-border	Assessed for New South Wales and the ACT by the general method.
Isolation	0.19	Isolation	General method.
User Charges		Nil	Equal Per Capita

INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED FROM STATES

61. Areas in which additional information from the States would assist the assessment include:

- (i) the number of children using Children and Youth Support Services from families with annual incomes of less than and greater than \$26 000;
- (ii) the rate of child abuse and neglect by age bands 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 and 15-17 years;
- (iii) the number of children from non-English speaking background using State funded child care services; and,
- (iv) details of any additional services provided to NESB children.

**MAJOR CHANGES IN THE STATES SERVICE PROVISIONS AND POLICIES
SINCE THE 1999 REVIEW**

62. The family and children's services function covers services for the protection and care of children and for the improvement of individual and family wellbeing. Across the States, community service departments fund and provide a wide range of services for children and for their families. The services include;

- (i) child care and pre-school service;
- (ii) parent education and advice;
- (iii) family support and early intervention services; and,
- (iv) child protection and out-of-home care services.

63. Over the years, the increasing demand for family and children's services has caused the States to put increasing emphasis on family support services. Many States have introduced cross-departmental strategies such as *Families First* in New South Wales and *Strengthening Families* in Victoria. These strategies aim to assist families in a more holistic way, by co-ordinated service delivery and giving better access to different types of children's and family services. There has also been an increasing focus on early intervention services which are seen to be effective in reducing the need for more intrusive child protection interventions at later stages.

64. **New South Wales.** The new *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* was proclaimed in December 2000. The Act creates new responsibilities for the Department of Community Services and other community agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children and young people and to provide for their care and support. It also supports greater participation by Indigenous families and communities in decision-making regarding the care of Indigenous children and young people.

65. **Victoria.** A wide-ranging examination of child protection and supported placements commented in 2000-01. This has helped to guide the development of a long-term integrated strategy for the management of demand for child protection and placement services, including an examination of alternative service delivery models. A major focus of these services is to reduce the demand for child protection services by strengthening family support and other services. There was also an extensive examination and report on the quality of services provided to children in residential care. This led to the adoption of new minimum service standards, the development of regional service improvement plans and an enhanced monitoring framework.

66. **Queensland.** Queensland's *Child Protection Act 1999* (proclaimed in March 2000) introduced a new range of time-limited protection orders. The Act shifts the emphasis from determining abuse or neglect to determining whether a child or young person

has suffered harm or is likely to suffer harm. This has enabled a more inclusive and child focused approach.

67. **Western Australia.** The Western Australia Police and the Department for Community Development have established a joint response program in the metropolitan area for the investigation of child abuse. The aim is to improve services and outcomes for children. The latter department is also conducting a high-level review of its out-of-home care services to ensure they continue to meet the changing needs of the community and are based on the most recent research and examples of best practice.

68. **South Australia.** Inter-agency collaboration concerning children assessed as being in danger has been strengthened through joint family and youth services, police and child protection services training. The Department of Human Services has commissioned a review of South Australia's Alternative Care System with the final report due later this year. Review findings will inform new directions in management, review and monitoring of the alternative care program, as well as the development of a range of alternative care and support services.

69. **Tasmania.** The *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997* was proclaimed in July 2000. The Act promotes support for families in preference to the removal of children, encourages involvement of the wider family and community in making decisions about children, and introduces family group conferencing.

70. **Australian Capital Territory.** The *Children and Young People Act* commenced in May 2002. The Act reflects increased emphasis on family support and prevention services. An Indigenous unit was established to work with families and to provide a consultancy to other staff on Indigenous matters. A major activity that bridges the gap between protection and support is the *Schools as Communities* program. It uses a model of prevention and early intervention to provide support services from the familiar base of the local school. A major reform in the area of out-of-home care was the introduction of the *Looking After Children* system of guided practice.

71. **Northern Territory.** Child protection reforms introduced during 2000-01 were:

- (i) the adoption of screening tools to improve the quality and consistency of decision making at intake;
- (ii) a risk assessment framework for case practice;
- (iii) case auditing and an overhaul of existing quality assurance arrangements; and,
- (iv) improvements in the marketing of the services, including installation of a toll-free reporting phone line and new information and promotion materials for consumers.

72. State governments fund only a small proportion of child care services. The Commonwealth is the major government funder of these services, mainly through fee reduction payments to users. Most States provide funds for occasional care, centre-based

long day care, family day care and outside school hours care services. Some States also provide fee relief for parents using child care services, special programs and services for children and parents with additional needs, such as services for Indigenous children, children from culturally diverse backgrounds or children with a disability. In addition, States are responsible for licensing, regulating and implementing the national standards for child care services. Table A-1 shows the States expenditure on child care services in 1999-2000.

Table A-1 STATES EXPENDITURE ON CHILD CARE SERVICES, 1999-2000

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
State expenditure on child care (\$000)	31 895	7 085	13 689	1 854	13 051	1 454	1 895	2 195	72 846
Per capita expenditure (\$)	4.96	1.51	3.87	0.99	8.73	3.09	6.11	11.31	3.85
Family and children services per capita expenditure (a) (\$)	63.0	91.7	31.4	72.9	49.6	42.2	108.9	61.3	63.5
Child care as proportion of total category exp.(%)	7.87	1.65	12.31	1.36	17.59	7.32	5.61	18.45	6.07

(a) Adjusted to remove juvenile detention expenditure.

Source: *Report on Government Services 2001*, CGC, 2002 Update Report, *Supporting Information*.

73. Table A-1 shows that in 1999-2000, the child care expenditure comprised about 6 per cent of the total family and child services expenditure. In the 1999 Review, the comparable proportion was 9 per cent.

74. There have been no major changes in the States' policies and in the provision of child care by States since the last Review.