



## **Information Paper**

# **Key Issues Relating to Children and Youth**

**Australia**

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Children and Youth**

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AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

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**INFORMATION PAPER: KEY ISSUES RELATING TO CHILDREN  
AND YOUTH**

National Children and Youth Statistics Unit  
Australian Bureau of Statistics

*Children & Youth Information Development Plan – paper no.2*

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Context

The ABS is currently undertaking a project to identify priorities and development activities aimed at improving the overall quality and range of information available on the populations of children and youth. This process will identify the supply and demand for information in order to ascertain the information gaps, overlaps and deficiencies that exist. Importantly, the information development plan must also guide activities which will improve information shortcomings, by assigning roles and responsibilities in areas where improvement or development is required.

This paper forms part of the plan for children and youth information development (described as the 'Children and Youth Information Development Plan'). It will provide some guidance to the Children and Youth Information Development Plan and form part of the suite of outputs from the project.

## 1.2. Purpose

This paper attempts to identify the "key issues" relating to children and youth. It has been written as a tool to engage stakeholders in the field of children and youth statistics. As such, it is designed to generate discussion among stakeholders so that the ABS can clarify the important (key) issues in this field as input to the development of the Children and Youth Information Development Plan.

## 1.3. Content and structure

There are eight key issues identified in this paper – four relating to children and four to youth.

### *Issues relating to children*

1. Early childhood and maternal health
2. Preventing the abuse and neglect of children
3. Children and economic disadvantage
4. Children's learning

### *Issues relating to youth*

1. Educational achievement and participation
2. Transition to employment
3. Social participation
4. Risk behaviours

The key issues are described in broad terms, along with a discussion of the policies, key questions and related key data sources. As such, the paper is not intended to be a detailed and exhaustive reference regarding the issues affecting and involving children and young people. For instance, there is no detailed discussion of how issues differ for sub-groups of the population, e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, persons from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, etc.

The choice of issues presented in this paper was based on a number of factors and were gleaned from various sources. In order to be considered for inclusion, the issue needed to be:

- of significance to the population of Australian children and youth;
- an identified main issue or priority in current Australian Government policy initiatives; and
- of relatively longstanding interest or an emerging issue, but expected to have longevity in terms of relevance and policy interest.

Issues that fit this broad criteria have been identified and given relative priority according to information provided to the ABS via:

- feedback from members of the Children and Youth Statistics Advisory Group (and also by related subject matter expert areas within the ABS);
- consultations undertaken between staff of the ABS' National Children and Youth Statistics Unit (NCYSU) and other relevant agencies in the field;
- information provided at network forums, such as conferences and working groups related to children and youth; and
- Australian Government policy documents (particularly those discussed in Section 2.2, below).

Although this paper discusses issues of data demand and supply for each identified key issue, it is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of information development needs. While data gaps, deficiencies and overlaps in children and youth information are touched on in this paper, they will be examined more fully in latter stages of the project, once detailed stakeholder feedback has been obtained.

For each key issue identified, a set of related "key questions" has been documented. These have been derived on the same basis as the key issues (as outlined above). The key questions presented here are a selection of those being asked by stakeholders in this field and provide some further information to explain why each key issue is of importance. They are used to provide some insight into the main areas (current and emerging) where better information is needed. In addition, it is recognised that some of the key questions documented in this paper are complex and extremely difficult to address and, in some instances, may not have a practical data solution.

For each key issue identified, there is a summary of the key data sources of relevance. Although these data sources are discussed briefly in the main body of the paper, it should be noted that a more detailed description of each source is contained in the Appendix. This information is ordered by the key issues and summarises the method of collection, custodian, purpose, age and geographic scope and frequency of each source of data.

#### **1.4. Stakeholder feedback**

As mentioned above, this paper is designed to generate discussion among stakeholders to enable the ABS to clarify the important issues in the children and youth field. Feedback on the issues discussed in this paper is welcome. Please send any comments to the ABS' National Children and Youth Statistics Unit, by email [lesley.martin@abs.gov.au](mailto:lesley.martin@abs.gov.au).



## **2. Over-arching themes and policies**

### **2.1. Themes and interactions**

It is recognised that children and youth develop in the context of families and communities. They are influenced by their participation in a variety of settings, including education and work and through their interactions with their environment. Along with parents, families and communities, children are co-creators of the circumstances that determine their life outcomes. The life outcomes children and youth experience are also shaped by the environments in which they live and the social and economic factors to which they are exposed. Governments are interested in positively influencing the environments of young people. They aim to encourage and facilitate young peoples participation in education, work, community life and social interactions to improve their current and future wellbeing.

The key issues identified in this paper are bound together by cross-cutting themes. One particularly important theme is that of participation (social, economic, and civic). Participation in learning in terms of literacy, access to early educational day care and preschool experiences, engagement in school and its social contexts and further education and lifelong learning are important to a persons development. The early economic experiences of children and young people, and patterns of entry into work experience and formal employment are also of importance. Furthermore, the barriers to participation including social exclusion, social inequality, isolation (geographic), and issues to do with marginal populations present significant challenges. It is important to consider participation (social, economic and civic) across the life-course. By focussing on participation the emphasis is placed on data that describe the contexts and determinants and therefore data which describe prevention and intervention opportunities. Prevention is a key aspect of the main current policies relating to children and youth.

This paper identifies four key issues of relevance to children and four for youth. However, these issues are not mutually exclusive, nor are the four issues identified for each group exclusive to those groups. For example, issues concerning access to education, social participation and risk behaviours cover both children and youth. They are only presented here as discrete, for ease of discussion and analysis. Interrelationships between key issues and across different sub-groups of the population will be explored more fully in later stages of the project.

### **2.2. Policies**

There are many individual policies, programs, strategies and initiatives which aim to address the issues affecting children and youth. However, three key national programs are particularly relevant.

The Australian Government is leading the development of a *National Agenda for Early Childhood*<sup>1</sup> to provide an agreed national framework for optimising child development in Australia through prevention and early intervention approaches. The National Agenda aims to set directions and actions for how the needs of young children and their families can be met across health, learning and care, parent support and at the community and broader socioeconomic level. Key objectives of the National Agenda are to: better coordinate the way services are delivered; enhance collaboration between and across governments and with the non-government sector; and to raise public awareness of the importance of the early years for a range of life outcomes. Key action areas identified are: healthy young families; early learning and care; supporting families and parenting; and child-friendly communities.

Consultations on the National Agenda for Early Childhood lead to the development of the Department of Family and Community Services' *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004-08*<sup>2</sup>. The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004-08 is an Australian Government initiative to strengthen families, their children and communities by working with them. Building on the first four years of the Strategy, this next phase will have a greater focus on early childhood development aligned with the four key action areas of the National Agenda for Early Childhood. Funding is in four streams: *Communities for Children* providing for early childhood initiatives in 45 disadvantaged communities; *Early Childhood – Invest to Grow* to support the development of national early childhood programs and resources; *Local Answers* to support a range of community development projects; and *Choice and Flexibility in Child Care* to continue the in-home care program and quality assurance systems for child care.

The federal government's policy framework on young people, which covers their health, wellbeing and development, is addressed in the *Living Choices* statement<sup>3</sup>, which emphasises the importance of reaching adult independence and supporting social and economic participation.<sup>4</sup> The Australian Government has also produced the *Australians Working Together*<sup>5</sup> initiative, which includes specific help for youth with work experience, learning new skills, education and training and looking for work.

From the policies it is clear that prevention is a key theme and a cost effective approach to Australia's health and wellbeing. It is also clear that a coordinated and holistic approach to issues facing children and youth is required. Certainly areas such as child development, health and wellbeing are closely linked together and wellbeing outcomes have common determinants.

A holistic picture therefore requires data from across the domains of young people's lives. It needs to cover their physical and social environments. In this sense linked data could be of great benefit as would more data which allowed a longitudinal view of a young persons circumstances. More regular data in certain areas (e.g. mental health and nutrition) would also seem highly desirable.

### 3. The key issues for children

#### 3.1. Early childhood and maternal health

##### *i) The issue*

There is a wide body of research supporting the notion that the health of the mother, especially during pregnancy and the post natal period, and the health of the child in the early years of life influence health and wellbeing patterns through out the life cycle. Correspondingly, interventions in relation to maternal and early child health are an important way of improving the health of the population overall.

##### *ii) The key policies*

A number of recent policy initiatives and programs recognise the need for good maternal and early childhood health strategies, and have provided for a focus on preventative programs. Prevention and early intervention form part of the basis of the *National Agenda for Early Childhood*<sup>2</sup>, which looks to provide a framework which will aid in providing a better start to life for children.

The federal department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) is responsible for most of the national programs and strategies impacting on early childhood. The *National Immunisation Program*<sup>6</sup> focusses primarily on children under five years of age, and provides free vaccine to protect against 12 vaccine preventable diseases.

In 2000 DoHA launched the *National Child Nutrition Program*<sup>7</sup>, targeting children aged 0 to 12 years and pregnant women, with the core aim of improving the capacity of children, parents and communities to deal with nutritional health.

Complementing this program is the *Healthy Weight 2008 - Australia's Future - The National Action Agenda for Children and Young People and Their Families*<sup>8</sup>, designed to achieve healthier weight in children and young people over the next four years.

There are a number of initiatives which would appear to be related to improving outcomes related to maternal health. These include the *National Breastfeeding Strategy*<sup>9</sup> and the *Voluntary Folate Fortification Strategy*<sup>10</sup>, among others.

##### *iii) Key questions*

1. What are the conditions which foster and inhibit early childhood and maternal health? What are the relationships, in terms of risk and protective factors between child health and maternal health and child outcomes over the life-course? How can prevention and early intervention modify the pathways that lead to poor outcomes?
2. What are the emerging trends in the prevalence of child health, including preventable illness and injury?
3. Which groups of children and mothers are most at risk (according to geographic location, ethnicity, etc.)?
4. What are the implications of early exposure to risks for health later in life?

5. How can the incidence of injury and accidental death among young children be reduced?
6. How might resources best be allocated to reduce the prevalence of morbidity, disability and mortality among children?
7. What new performance indicators for early child health might be desirable?

*iv) Key information sources*

An overall snapshot of the health and wellbeing of children and young people is provided by the ongoing ABS *National Health Survey* and *Indigenous Health Survey*. These surveys provide an understanding of the health status of Australians, risk factors and health related actions taken, and their relationship to demographic and socioeconomic factors.

The *National Nutrition Survey 1995* provided population data at a national level on the nutritional habits and behaviours of children and youth (aged 2 years and over) and included data on children's measured height and weight.

Annual national information on births is available from the ABS' *Births* collection, which includes data on birth weight.

Immunisation is seen as one of the main ways of preventing the incidence of disease in children. The *Australia Childhood Immunisation Register*, established by the Health Insurance Commission in 1996 has vaccination rates for children aged 0-6 years registered with Medicare.

Information on mortality (e.g. causes such as perinatal conditions, motor vehicle accidents and SIDS) and morbidity (e.g. injuries and conditions such as asthma and diabetes) is available from a range of ABS and non-ABS sources. The annual ABS *Causes of Death* collection provides information on mortality rates and causes of death across Australian states and territories, including details on children and perinatal deaths. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) *National Hospital Morbidity Database* and *National Cancer Statistics Clearing House*, and the *National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (Communicable Diseases Network of Australia and New Zealand)* partly provide a picture of the incidence and patterns of morbidity among children. The AIHW is also responsible for the *Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health*<sup>11</sup> (BEACH) collection, which covers children's encounters with GPs and, as such, is a source of information on child morbidity. Information on dental health is available from AIHW's annual *National Dental Telephone Interview Survey*.<sup>12</sup>

The *Growing Up in Australia* study and *Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (Footprints in Time)* are currently being developed and will be important additions to the cross-sectional data discussed above. They will provide for longitudinal analysis of the health and wellbeing of Australian children from birth, including the factors which impact on health outcomes through the life cycle.

## 3.2. Preventing the abuse and neglect of children

### *i) The issue*

This issue focuses on those children who are in need of protection – this includes children who have been abused (physically, sexually or emotionally), neglected or otherwise harmed, and/or whose parents cannot provide adequate care and protection for them. Child abuse and neglect may be associated with multiple risk factors such as low socioeconomic status, family disruption, domestic violence and substance abuse. Children in need of protection are of concern because of the profound negative effect abuse and neglect can have on their health and wellbeing, both in the short- and long-term.

### *ii) Key policies*

Preventing abuse and neglect has been the topic of a number of international-level strategies, in particular, the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child*<sup>13</sup>, which spells out core human rights for children, including protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation.

In an Australian context, the *National Approach to Parenting, Early Childhood intervention and Child Abuse Protection*<sup>14</sup> and *Tomorrow's Children - Australia's National Plan of Action Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*<sup>15</sup> provide guidelines for prevention of forms of child abuse and exploitation. In addition, the *National Injury Prevention Plan: 2001-2003*<sup>16</sup> outlines strategies for preventing injuries and deaths related to issues of potential neglect.

### *iii) Key questions*

1. What are the key risk and protective factors associated with abuse and neglect. For example, how important are factors such as parental education, parental mental health, parental age, employment status, ethnicity, abuse in own childhood, alcohol/drug dependency and family cohesion?
2. How widespread is the problem of abuse and neglect among young children and how is it most commonly presented (e.g. injury, behavioural problems, poor educational outcomes)?
3. Which groups of children are in most need of protection (e.g. by age groups, ethnicity, rural/remote versus major urban, family type, etc.)?
4. How is the prevalence of abuse and neglect changing over time and what factors are driving these changes?
5. What are the key outcomes of early childhood experiences of abuse and neglect in terms of later education, work and health and wellbeing circumstances of the child?
6. What are the wellbeing outcomes for children who live in households where domestic violence occurs and for children who are bullied in both the immediate and longer term?

7. How might resources be best allocated to reduce the prevalence of abuse and neglect among children?
8. How well do measures such as re-notification rates reflect the extent of the problem?

*iv) Key information sources*

Data on the incidence of various risk factors is available from a range of sources. Background information on divorce can be obtained from ABS *Marriage and Divorce* statistics and issues of family cohesion are examined in *Family Characteristics Survey*, *General Social Survey*, and the *Child and Adolescent Component of the National Survey of Mental Health and Well-being 1998*.

The *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection* is an administrative dataset that includes information about people receiving accommodation support, hence provides an indirect measure of neglected children.

The incidence of different forms of abuse or neglect can be obtained from AIHW collections: *Child protection Notifications, Investigations and Substantiations*, *Children on Care and Protection Orders*, and *Children in Out-of-home Care*. The ABS *Women's Safety Survey 1996* includes data on women abused as a child, while the comparable *Personal Safety Survey 2005* will provide this data for men and women in Australia.

ABS *Crime and Justice* data highlights the level and nature of recorded crime (including assault and sexual assault) and records details regarding victims of recorded crime.

### **3.3. Children and economic disadvantage**

*i) The issue*

Children who live in economically disadvantaged households can be adversely affected by these circumstances. Among the population of children in Australia, certain groups are more likely to be in households with low income than others—for example, many Indigenous children grow up in low income households. Further, low incomes and economic disadvantage are also more prevalent in certain geographic areas and among certain family types.

Some children live in households or families where no parent is employed. Children living in these circumstances are seen by many as an at-risk group. In particular, not having an employed parent is regarded as an indicator of risk of socioeconomic disadvantage for children (and families). Children living in these circumstances for extended periods may not have a role model of employment to follow and may be more likely to have outcomes such as welfare dependency and diminished economic success in the long term.<sup>17</sup> However, in some cases, such as when the parent chooses to be without a job to care for children, there may also be positive effects for children living without an employed parent.

### *ii) Key policies*

The Public Health Association of Australia's *Socio-Economic Inequality and its Negative Health Impact for Children and their Families* strategy<sup>18</sup> aims to reduce the incidence, depth and impact of poverty on children and their families. *A National Agenda for Young Children in Australia*<sup>19</sup> is a paper prepared by the National Investment for the Early Years (NIFTeY). This paper recognises the challenges that face Australian families including poverty, under employment and overwork, job insecurity, casualisation of the workforce, and the increasing gap between the wealthy and poorer members of our society. The *National Homelessness Strategy*<sup>20</sup> presents a framework around which to design programs and policies that will lead to the prevention and amelioration of homelessness.

### *iii) Key questions*

1. What is the extent of children living in circumstances of economic disadvantage?
2. Which population groups containing children have the highest levels of economic disadvantage currently (consider by family type, ethnicity, geographic region, etc.)?
3. What are the health, development and wellbeing outcomes for children in situations of longer term economic disadvantage?
4. To what degree do children living in welfare dependent households become welfare dependent themselves in adulthood?
5. For children and their families, what barriers to social participation are arising due to economic disadvantage?
6. To what degree can children's educational experiences lead them to overcome economic disadvantage later in life?
7. What are the most effective means of alleviating economic disadvantage for children?
8. What are the different impacts on children in different family circumstances of joblessness and parental labour force participation ?

### *iv) Key information sources*

Detailed information on the income of families with children is available through the biennial *Survey of Income and Housing Costs*, while detailed household expenditure patterns are covered in the six-yearly *Household Income and Expenditure Survey*. Information on the labour force status of families is available monthly from the *Labour Force Survey*, including status of employment, occupation and industry, duration of unemployment and hours worked.

Information on income relating to children and their parents, along with information on a broad range of social issues is available from several sources. Longitudinal data of this nature is available from the Department of Family and Community Services (DFaCS) commissioned survey, *Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia* (HILDA) which collects a range of longitudinal information on families with children that is useful for undertaking analyses related to economic disadvantage. There is also longitudinal data available from the *Growing up in Australia* study and the *Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (Footprints in Time)*. The ABS *General Social Survey*, also covers a broad range of social issues (including household income and indicators of financial stress). Similar information for Indigenous children and their parents will soon be available from the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey*.<sup>21</sup> Information regarding parental income, educational attainment of parents and child support paid by parents living elsewhere and detailed family composition of households is available from the *Family Characteristics Survey*.

Income for households with children was also collected in the *National Health Survey* alongside detailed information on health status, health related actions taken, risk factors, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Income data at lower geographic levels are available from the *Census of Population and Housing*.

Administrative data from the DFaCS *Longitudinal Data Set (LDS) 1% Sample* enables some analysis of income support payments to customers over time, and is a source of information on the economic wellbeing of customers including children and their families.

### **3.4. Children's learning**

#### *i) The issue*

In the context of this key issue, children's learning relates to all learning settings that occur up to and including primary school years. This comprises early learning experiences, and encompasses both formal (preschool, child care, school) and informal learning settings (homes, playgroups). Early learning is an important area for government as quality early learning and care experiences in the years before school lay the foundation for a smooth transition to school and later school success. Evidence suggests that critical brain development occurs before 3 years of age, highlighting the importance of fostering quality learning experiences for children in all environments from birth. Similarly, the year before school has been recognised as extremely important to child development as this is a crucial time for working with children who may have difficulty adjusting to the primary school environment. Early learning patterns can heavily influence subsequent learning and development and are therefore a very effective way of preventing later learning and development problems.<sup>2</sup> Primary school years are also very important to a child's learning, and the successful transition from primary to secondary school is an important influence on the child's later learning experience and educational success.



### *ii) Key policies*

The *National Agenda for Early Childhood*<sup>2</sup> is the key policy for addressing improvements in this issue, and focusses on Early Learning and Care as one of its four priority areas. A number of specific policies by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) are relevant for formal school-level learning. MCEETYA outlined desirable goals for school education in their 1999 report, *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century*.<sup>22</sup> This report is consistent with many of the goals of DEST's *National Literacy and Numeracy Plan*<sup>23</sup>, which focuses on the early years of school, with the goal that every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level.

### *iii) Key questions*

1. What are the key factors that impact on early learning (e.g. socioeconomic status, access and affordability issues, cognitive competence, social competence, problem behaviours, nutrition, disability and (for Indigenous children in particular) hearing impairment)?
2. How do children in different population groups fare in terms of their early learning experiences (consider by family type, ethnicity, geographic region, children with disabilities, etc.)?
3. What are the levels of participation in the various preschool and formal child care settings, including playgroups and how do they affect subsequent school education?
4. How does early learning influence work and career later in life?
5. What levels of literacy and numeracy attainment are being achieved in primary and secondary schools and how are factors such as school attendance, social engagement of children, and children's self esteem and cultural identity linked to these?
6. What strategies are needed to improve the recruitment, retention and training of teachers and child care workers?
7. How can parent-child relations be influenced to better facilitate early learning and how can parental skills and knowledge (in terms of providing early learning opportunities in the home for children) be increased?
8. What is the level of use of, and proficiency in, information and communications technology (ICT) among school students?

### *iv) Key information sources*

Information on students in childhood school learning is available annually from *Schools Australia*, particularly numbers by government/non-government school, Indigenous students and by state and territory. Small geographic area details of children's attendance at school is presented in the five yearly *Census of Population and Housing*. In addition, reading, writing and numeracy benchmarks are compiled by MCEETYA in the *National Performance Measurement of Schools* using a range of administrative data sources, and focussing on key student outcomes.

Information on preschool students is covered by the three-yearly ABS *Child Care Survey*, DFACS' *Child Care Census* and DEST's annual *National Indigenous Pre-school Census*. In addition, new national information on children's use of preschool and child care services and workers in these services, is being developed by the AIHW as part of their *Children's Services National Minimum Dataset*.

The ABS *Time Use Survey* has some information on time spent by parents teaching children at home, while the five-yearly *Disability, Ageing and Carers* surveys cover education of young children with disabilities. Information on expenditure on preschools is included as part of the annual *Government Finance Statistics Collection*.

Longitudinal information relating to children's early education will be available from the longitudinal *Growing up in Australia* study and *Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (Footprints in Time)*. Additional information will be available from another longitudinal study, *Project Good Start*, examining the practices and learning experiences that support the early numeracy development of children in the year before school.

## 4. The key issues for youth

### 4.1. Educational achievement and participation

#### *i) The issue*

Individuals can benefit from the opportunity early in life to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and understandings necessary for lifelong learning, employment and full participation in society. Education is important for the overall wellbeing of young people and society, as an educated workforce is vital to a prosperous society. Education and training are not only helpful in the transition into the workforce, but literacy is associated with improved health and wellbeing.

The state and territory governments have constitutional responsibility for schooling, with strategic policy development and delivery of programs and services coordinated at the national level through the MCEETYA.

#### *ii) The key policies*

In April 1999, MCEETYA endorsed a new set of *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*<sup>22</sup>. The national goals provide a basis for investment in schooling. The key policy relating to Indigenous education is the *National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996-2002*<sup>24</sup> which has seven key priorities. In addition a MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education, Employment, Training and Youth<sup>25</sup> is dedicated to improving education and employment opportunities for young Indigenous people. The Australian Government has funded several initiatives which support the participation and continuation of education for youth. The *Reconnect Program*<sup>26</sup> aims to improve the level of engagement in education for homeless young people or those at risk of homelessness, while the *Green Corps* program<sup>27</sup> provides young people with accredited training and work experience to improve their career prospects and provides assistance in preparation for employment.

#### *iii) The key questions*

1. What are the current key factors (barriers and opportunities) affecting educational participation for young people?
2. How does access to education differ for differing population groups?
3. How do educational outcomes vary for students in different models of schooling/curriculum delivery, including state versus private school outcomes?
4. How have educational participation levels changed?
5. How do differentials in access and educational attainment among youth affect lifelong learning patterns?
6. What are the most effective means of improving access to education in the longer term?

7. What are the most effective means of reducing the incidence of early school leaving?
8. How do young people's attitudes to careers, family formation, health, etc. impact their participation in tertiary education?

*iv) The key information sources*

The ABS publication, *Measuring Learning in Australia: A framework for education and training statistics 2003*, provides an overall framework for organising and presenting information relating to education and training.

Information relating to participation in education, patterns of study, levels of educational attainment, and the unmet demand for education and the transition of young people from education to work is covered by the annual *Survey of Education and Work*. For detailed geographic breakdowns of educational attainment and participation the five yearly *Census of Population and Housing* is a key source. Information on numbers and characteristics of school children enrolled in secondary schools is available from the annual *National School Statistics Collection*. Information on Indigenous students is available from the *Census of Population and Housing* and the *National School Statistics Collection*. In addition, literacy, numeracy and science benchmarks for secondary school students (15 year olds) are sourced from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Administrative data on participation in further education are collected by DEST ( *Higher Education Student Data Collection*) and NCVET (*Vocational Education and Training Collection Statistics*).

Lifelong learning patterns are more difficult to track, but detailed information on education including a persons educational history was collected in the *Survey of Education and Training 1998*. The ACER *Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY)* are also a valuable information source for understanding pathways through education and training adopted by youth.

## **4.2. Transition to employment**

*i) The issue*

The transition of young people into work is an area of great policy interest for the government, as evidenced by the numerous government youth employment initiatives and the expansion of vocational education and training in schools. There has been a focus on young people who have been unable to attain full-time work upon leaving school as this can affect their future and may lead to long-term unemployment. However, the general transition from education (school or further education) to work and indeed moving from being unemployed or not in the labour force to full or part-time employment is of great interest and concern to governments. Particular groups of young people have been identified of being of greatest risk of making successful transitions; further, it is known that those with poor transition outcomes often experience difficult working lives overall. More broadly, failure to make effective transitions can have a detrimental impact on quality of life in both the short and long term.

*ii) The key policies*

The Government supports young people's transition to employment through economic policies aimed at: improving young people's competitiveness in the labour market; job creation through sustained economic growth; and provision of effective employment assistance.

The Government has undertaken specific youth policy development initiatives. The *Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce* was formed in September 1999 and produced a comprehensive report to government in May 2001 entitled *Footprints to the Future*.<sup>28</sup> Several programs were formed as part of the ongoing response to this report, including the *Career and Transition (CAT) Pilot Program*,<sup>29</sup> the *Partnership Outreach Education Model (POEM) pilot*<sup>30</sup> and the *Mentor Marketplace program*.<sup>31</sup> MCEETYA also created a *Transition from School Taskforce* in 2001 to provide advice on a range of schooling issues including initiatives that address student transition from school to post-school options.

In the area of vocational education and training, *Shaping Our Future, the National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training (VET) 2004-2010*<sup>32</sup> is a collective strategy by government and industry to ensure industries will have a highly skilled workforce to support strong performance in the global economy. The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) partners with Indigenous Australians in *A Learning Culture: Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2000-2005*.<sup>33</sup>

The MCEETYA *Framework for Vocational Education in Schools* supports the establishment of vocational education in schools and embraces a need for improved transition pathways for young people from school to work and further education and training. There are also several programs that have been developed by government departments to help young people with the transition from school to work. These include the *Jobs Pathway Programme (JPP)*<sup>34</sup>, *The New Apprenticeships Access Programme (NAAP)*<sup>35</sup>, *Working Together for Indigenous Youth*<sup>36</sup>, *Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools Programmes*<sup>37</sup>, *Structured Workplace Learning*, *New Apprenticeships/School-based New Apprenticeships*<sup>38</sup>, *The Job Placement and Employment and Training (JPET) program*.<sup>39</sup>

A number of programs also provide direct employment assistance. *Work for the Dole* and *Green Corps* provide young people with opportunities to gain work experience and develop work based skills and knowledge important in the transition to full-time employment. The *Job Network* is a national network of private and community organisations contracted by the Australian government to provide employment services for unemployed people. It provides a system to help young people identify suitable employment opportunities and also receive assistance via *JobSearch*.

*iii) The key questions*

1. What are the key risks and opportunities faced by youth in terms of making a smooth transition to secure employment (e.g. completing year 12, episodes and length of unemployment experienced, participation in part-time employment, patterns of transition, etc.)?
2. What are the current trends in the length and timing of the transition phase?
3. What are the trends in participation in further education and how do these vary with student characteristics?
4. How does the risk of successful transition for youth vary by different population groups (e.g. by geographic location, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc.)?
5. What are the longer term outcomes of a poor transition?
6. What strategies are needed to effect better transitions for youth (e.g. career advice and guidance, planning and assistance for school transition, etc.)?

*iv) The key information sources*

A wealth of information relating to the transition from education to work is available annually via the *Survey of Education and Work*. Detailed information on youth trends in the labour force is explained in the monthly *Labour Force Survey*, including information on employment and unemployment. Detailed information on the job search experiences of youth are available from the annual *Job Search Experience Survey*.

Small geographic area detail of labour force information including occupation and industry is available from the *Census of Population and Housing*. The census also identifies Indigenous youth.

Data on the labour force experience of youth who adopted different types of education and training can be assessed from the ACER *Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth*. The annual *Graduate Destination Survey* collects information on higher education graduates' experiences of entry into the labour force. Relevant vocational education and training statistics are compiled annually by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training, including a *Student Outcomes Survey* and a planned *Indigenous Student Outcomes Survey* (to be run in 2004). The Department of Family and Community Services (DFaCS) holds a wealth of administrative data related to this topic, including the *Longitudinal Data Set (LDS) 1% Sample*, which is a rich source of information on its customers and their changing status with regard to welfare payments over time.

### 4.3. Social participation

#### *i) The issue*

Social participation, broadly speaking, refers to people engaging effectively in all domains of living appropriate to their stage of life. Common areas of participation, of interest to the government, are family life and early childhood development, health, education, employment, income and housing. Such participation helps to empower youth and encourages engagement in the social structures influencing their lives. Community participation for youth, including socialising and leisure activities are emerging as important in achieving more general wellbeing outcomes, such as health and education. Current Australian public policy focuses on building strong communities and social participation is seen as an essential component. There has been a shift away from crisis intervention and towards prevention and early intervention. There has also been a focus on participation and active citizenship. The *Footprints to the Future*<sup>28</sup> report also emphasises a commitment to see greater engagement of youth in decision making structures within their communities to promote active citizenship.

#### *ii) The key policies*

Social Participation is one of the three key strategic outcomes for DFACS and seeks to maximise the engagement of Australians in society. The Australian Government, through DFACS, funds a number of programs aimed at increasing the social participation of youth, such as the National Youth Roundtable<sup>40</sup> and the Australian Forum of Youth Organisations (AFOYO).<sup>41</sup> DFACS also funds the *National Skills Development for Volunteers*<sup>42</sup> program, which is part of the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*<sup>1</sup> and focuses on the provision of general and specialist training and skills development to volunteers to improve the standard of service to communities. *Promoting and Maintaining Good Health*<sup>43</sup> is a DEST national research priority which includes goals for understanding and strengthening key elements of Australia's social and economic fabric to help families and individuals live healthy, productive and fulfilling lives. There are also a range of initiatives which form part of the federal government's policy framework on young people, which itself has a focus on youth development and engagement.

#### *iii) The key questions*

1. What are the key factors that affect the social participation of young people?
2. What are the levels of youth involvement in community support?
3. What are the levels of participation of young people in different sporting and leisure activities and how can these be positively influenced?
4. How does social participation differ by population subgroups?
5. What associations can be identified between social participation and the health and wellbeing of young people?
6. What strategies have the most positive influence on the social participation of young people?

*iv) The key information sources*

The ABS framework for social capital is a useful means of organising information of youth social participation. Information on social networks, cultural and recreational activities, social participation, personal safety and security and aspects of health and wellbeing was collected in the 2002 *General Social Survey*, but only for those aged 18 years and over. Similar information is available for Indigenous Australians from the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey*. The *Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia* (HILDA) survey collects longitudinal information of a wide range of areas of social concern relating to youth and social participation. The *Census of Population and Housing* contains information at small geographic areas relating to religious affiliation and Australian Citizenship and identifies Indigenous people.

Detailed information on voluntary workers is covered in the *Survey of Voluntary Work*, for those 18 years and over. Social participation, recreation and leisure and voluntary work and care activities according to daily activity patterns are also available from the *Time Use Survey* for people aged 15 years and over.

Fear of crime and being a victim of crime can lead to social disengagement. Information relating to household and personal crime is available from *Crime and Safety Survey* which covers people aged 18 years and over and includes their perception of problems, fear of crime and behaviour as a result of crime. The *Women's Safety Survey, 1996* provides information on women's safety at home and in the community and, in particular, on the nature and extent of violence against women in Australia. The next survey will be the *Personal Safety Survey* and will include information on the male experience of crime.

#### **4.4. Risk behaviours**

*i) The issue*

Young people face many issues that are stressful including: an increasing need for independence; peer relationships; and identity issues. The period is marked by increased exposure to risks that may predispose young people to poor health outcomes. Young people may also participate in a number of risk behaviours, which are often a response to issues they face in their personal lives. These behaviours can include: alcohol and tobacco use, illicit drug use; poor nutrition and diet; inadequate physical exercise; unprotected sex; dangerous driving and self-harm.



ii) *The key policies*

There are numerous government policies relating to this issue with many targeted at specific risk behaviours or at-risk groups. The *National Drug Strategy, Australia's Integrated Framework 2004-2009*<sup>44</sup> aims to improve health, social and economic outcomes by preventing the uptake of harmful drug use and reducing the harmful effects of licit and illicit drugs in Australian society. This document is a national policy framework that is supported by a range of specific strategies and initiatives. The *National Psychostimulants Initiative* aims to address problems associated with the increased availability and use of psychostimulants in Australia. The first *National Hepatitis C Strategy 1999-2000 to 2003-2004* aimed to reduce hepatitis C transmission in Australia and minimise the personal and social impacts of hepatitis C infection. The Australian Government has commissioned the development of a new draft *National Hepatitis C strategy 2005-2008*.

*The National Action Plan for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health*<sup>45</sup> aims to promote mental health, and prevent and reduce mental health problems and mental disorders among young adults. *National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy*<sup>46</sup> aims to prevent premature death from suicide among young people. The *Draft National Injury Prevention Plan 2004 Onwards* aims to ensure that Australians have the greatest chance of a life free from preventable injuries while continuing to lead active and challenging lives. Young people aged 15–24 years, rural and remote populations, Indigenous communities and alcohol and injury represent four of the six key priority areas of the plan. The *National Comorbidity Initiative*<sup>47</sup> aims to improve coordination across psychiatric/mental health services and drug treatment services, develop best practice guidelines for service delivery, and increase professional education and training. The *National Indigenous Australians Sexual Health Strategy*<sup>48</sup> provides a comprehensive approach to preventing the spread of HIV and other sexually transmissible infections (STI's) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The *National Road Safety Strategy (2000 - 2010)*<sup>49</sup> has a focus to road safety education for young people. The *Early Intervention, Youth, Crime & Families Strategy*<sup>50</sup> recognises the importance of adopting an 'early intervention' approach to crime prevention. As such programs include bullying, cannabis diversion, mentoring, communities, families and truancy. *The National Community Crime Prevention Programme* focuses on how to increase the ability of Australian communities to recognise local crime problems and to pursue effective, locally organised, crime prevention initiatives.

*National Public Health Partnership's Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan - Eat Well Australia, 2000-2010*<sup>51</sup> aims include the prevention of overweight and obesity. Young people have been specifically targeted in the plan for increased consumption of fruit and vegetables. The *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nutritional Strategy and Action Plan - 2000-2010*<sup>52</sup> areas for action include food supply in remote and rural areas; food security and socioeconomic status, family focused nutrition, nutrition in urban areas, and environment and household infrastructure. The Australian Government has also released a *Building a Healthy, Active Australia*<sup>53</sup> package which aims to tackle the growing problem of declining physical activity and poor eating habits of Australian children.

A number of other national policies of relevance are currently under development which include: The *National Plan of Action for Children and Youth* and The *National Child Public Health Action Plan*.

*iii) The key questions*

1. What are the emerging trends with regard to substance abuse and drug-related harm?
2. What are the emerging trends with regard to alcohol and tobacco use among youth?
3. What are the current key social and economic factors contributing to the use of licit and illicit drugs among Australian youth?
4. What is the extent of poor nutrition and diet and physical inactivity among youth and how does it vary by socio-economic status?
5. How is nutrition, diet and physical activity levels changing over time?
6. What is the extent of accident, injury and premature death (including suicides) and rates of immunisation among youth and how are they changing over time?
7. What is the extent of depression, mental health disorders and associated risk behaviours among youth and how are they changing?
8. Are there any established linkages between early childhood and the health of young people, and what are these linkages?
9. What are the most effective means of reducing risk behaviours?

*iv) The key information sources*

Most of the current information available from ABS sources on risk factors applies to those persons aged 18 years and over. The main sources of national information on risk factors include the *National Health Survey* (includes injury/accidents and contraceptive practices among women) and the *Indigenous Health Survey*. The *General Social Survey* also covers persons aged 18 years and over and includes some limited information on health and crime victimisation.

In the area of eating and nutrition, the *National Nutrition Survey 1995* collected information for all persons aged two years and over on food and beverage intake, physical measurements, food related habits and attitudes and food consumption patterns. The *National Physical Activity Surveys* covers persons aged 18–75 years and measures leisure-time physical activity, and assesses knowledge of current public health messages on physical activity.

Information on deaths occurring due to risk behaviours is collected by the annual *Causes of Death* collection which includes post-mortem indicator, drowning indicator, suicides, and deaths due to external causes (Indigenous deaths can be separately identified). *Road Fatalities Australia* gives the number of fatalities, monthly by age groups (0–16 years, 17–20 years and 21–25 years).

For annual information on crime and criminal behaviour, *Victims of Recorded Crime* (annual) covers children aged 0–14 years. *Crime and Safety Survey* collects information from people aged 18 years and over regarding their perception of problems, fear of crime, behaviour as a result of crime and data relating to household and personal crime. The national *Young People and Domestic Violence Survey*<sup>54</sup> surveyed attitudes towards domestic violence among persons aged 12–20 years. The AIHW are custodians of the *Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set*<sup>55</sup> (JJNMDS) which provides a unique source of nationally comparable, policy relevant information on the flow of young offenders through the justice system over time.

In relation to drugs specifically, the *National Drug Strategy Household Surveys* has information on drug-related awareness, knowledge and behaviours and attitudes on drug-related policies. The *Illicit Drug Reporting System* monitors the price, purity, availability and patterns of use of the main illicit drugs, as well as acting as an early warning system for emerging trends in illicit drug markets. The *2001 National Drug and Alcohol Research Survey* contains hospital separations with variables of principle diagnosis, age, sex, area of residence and Indigenous status. The *National Survey of Australian Secondary School Students (NSASS)* surveys government schools. Variables include knowledge and sources of knowledge of the transmission of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, attitudes to HIV, sexual practices and contraception, alcohol consumption and drugs. The *Australian Secondary Students Alcohol and Drug Survey* provides national and state estimates for those aged 12–17 years, by sex for alcohol and drug use. AIHW's *Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services - National Minimum Data Set* provides national and State and Territory statistics on alcohol and other drug treatment services, the clients who use these services, and the type of drug problems for which treatment is being sought.

Research has identified that mental health is closely related to a range of risk behaviours. Two important sources for information on youth and mental health are the *Child and Adolescent Component of the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing 1998* and the *National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing of Adults 1997*. The *Child and Adolescent Component of the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing 1998* collected information on children (4–12 years) and adolescents (13–17 years). Information was obtained from the parents of all respondents and directly from adolescents. The *National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing of Adults 1997* covered those aged 18 years and over, and provides information on the prevalence of a range of major mental disorders.

There are also a number of broad information sources that deal with the outcomes of risk behaviours (such as hospital statistics and the communicable diseases register), but they have not been included here.

## Appendix – Summary of data sources

### Early childhood and maternal health

Data source	Data type	Data custodian	Description	Age scope (years)	Geographic scope	Frequency
Australia Childhood Immunisation Register	Administrative	Health Insurance Commission	Children from birth to 6 years registered with Medicare are enrolled on the register which contains data on vaccination rates. Includes number vaccinated, immunisation provider, number of valid vaccinations, number of children fully immunised at various age cohorts.	0 to 6 years	Australia, states and territories	1996 to present
Bettering the Evaluation of Care and Health (BEACH)	Survey	General Practice Statistics and Classification Unit of the University of Sydney and AIHW	Survey of general practitioners encounters with patients. Variables include characteristics of general practitioner and patient, type of medical services provided, reasons for patients' attendance, problems managed at consultations, management techniques of general practitioner.	All ages	Australia, states and territories	1962-63, 1969-74, 1991, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003
Births	Administrative	ABS	Covers births, sex, weight, date of birth, Indigenous status, details of confinement and parents.	All ages	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	1974 to present
Causes of Death	Administrative	ABS	Includes children and details of perinatal deaths.	All ages	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual, 1907 onwards (limited variables)
Child Immunisation and Health Screening Survey	Survey	ABS	Covers immunisation of children 0-6 years, and sight, hearing and dental screening of children 0-14 years. Also includes demographic and family information.	0 to 6 years	Australia, states and territories	Irregular, 1995, Immunisation data collected previously under other surveys.
Deaths	Administrative	ABS	Covers Indigenous status, demographic items, family information, cause of death, and mortality rates.	All ages	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual, 1905 to present (limited variables).

Growing Up in Australia	Longitudinal survey	FaCS	Longitudinal survey that includes importance of family and child connections to later life, how belief and expectations of children effect their outcomes, impact over time of early experience on health, including conditions affecting the child's physical development (low birthweight, immunisation, in -uteroexposure to stress and drugs, nutrition, chronic illness or injury, parental disorders including maternal depression,), infant mental health, early conduct disorder.	Less than 12 months to 4 years	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual, commenced 2003
Indigenous Health Survey	Survey	ABS	Includes indicators of health status, health related actions taken, health risk factors, demographic and socio-economic characteristics.	All ages	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Latest 2001, Future 2004/05, 6 yearly thereafter
National Cancer Statistics Clearing House	Administrative	AIHW	Provides information on the incidence of cancer in the Australian population. Includes the number of new cases and age-specific rates for all registrable cancers excluding non-melanocytic skin cancer by year of diagnosis, sex and age.	All by 5 year age groups	Australia, states and territories and possibly lower levels of disaggregation	1982 to present
National Dental Telephone Interview Survey	Survey	AIHW	Variables include oral health status, dental treatment (time and place of, reason for, last dental visit, services received in the previous year, waiting time), perceived needs, social impact of dental health, hardship and affordability, difficulties associated with dental care, socio-demographic and economic details.	5-14 years	Australia, states and territories	Annually since 1989, latest 1999
National Health Survey	Survey	ABS	Includes indicators of health status (self-assessed health status, health transition, quality of life scale, K10 scale to indicate psychological distress), health related actions taken (visits to hospitals and day clinics, consultations with doctors, dentists and other health professionals, use of medications), health risk factors, demographic and socio-economic characteristics (includes injury), and breastfeeding history (for women only).	All ages	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Five yearly 1989-1990, 1995, latest 2001, future 2004/05
National Hospital Morbidity Database	Administrative	AIHW	Covers both public and private hospitalisation, variables include principal diagnosis, age, sex and Indigenous status.	All ages	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual 1993-94 onwards

National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System	Administrative	AIHW	Coordinates the surveillance of more than 40 communicable diseases. Variables include unique record reference number, State or Territory code, disease code, date of onset, date of notification to the relevant health authority, sex, age, Aboriginality.	All ages	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	1990 to present
Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health	Longitudinal survey	University of Newcastle	A 20 year survey designed to explore factors that influence health among Australian women. The study collects data on physical and emotional health; use of health services; health behaviours and risk factors; time use; socio-demographic factors; and life stages and key events.	All ages	Australia, states and territories	1995
National Nutrition Survey	Survey	ABS	Collected information on the food and beverage intake, physical measurements, food related habits and attitudes and food consumption patterns.	Children aged less than 2 years were excluded	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	1995

## Vulnerable children

Data source	Data type	Data custodian	Description	Age scope (years)	Geographic scope	Frequency
Child and Adolescent component of the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing	Survey	ABS	Prevalence of mental health problems and disorders, health related quality of life, service utilisation, health risk behaviour, family cohesion.	4 to 17 years	Australia	1998
Child Protection Notifications, Investigations and Substantiations	Administrative	AIHW	Collects information on allegations, investigations and findings of child abuse or neglect, child maltreatment or harm to a child. It covers information including the type of abuse, family type, relationship to abuser and source of notification. Indigenous status is also collected.	Under 18 years	Australia, states and territories	Annually
Children in Out of Home Care	Administrative	AIHW	Collects information on children in out-of-home overnight care, in both legal and voluntary placements, where the State makes a financial payment. Excludes children who are living with their parents and placements made in disability services, psychiatric services, SAAP services, juvenile justice facilities, and overnight child care services. Collects information on placement type, length of time in continuous out-of-home care, whether on an order and information on exits. Indigenous status is also collected.	0 to 17 years	Australia, states and territories	Annually
Children on Care and Protection Orders	Administrative	AIHW	Collects information on guardianship or custody orders, supervision and other finalised orders, and interim and temporary orders. Collects information regarding living arrangements, such as foster care, out of home care, family care etc, duration of an order and number of primary case workers. Indigenous status is also collected.	0 to 17 years on care and protection orders/arrangements (or children aged 18 years who were discharged from those care and protection).	Australia, states and territories	Annually



Crime and Justice	Administrative	ABS	Includes a collaboration of data sources including recorded crime (covers the level and nature of recorded crime, includes assault and sexual assault for children 0-9 and 10-14 years, details such as age of victim, sex of victim and relationship to offender), prisoners in Australia (includes information on the demographic and legal characteristics of prisoners including the nature of the offence), Crime and Safety (ABS) (victimisation in the community, experience of crime).	Crimes recorded against children 0-14 years	Australia, states and territories	Limited data since 1907. Recorded crime commenced 1993, Corrective Services 1998, Higher Criminal Courts 1995, and Prisoners since 1994.
Family Characteristics Survey	Survey	ABS	Topics include family information (such as whether the child has a natural parent living elsewhere and family blending), visiting arrangements with natural parents (frequency of visit, frequency of overnight stays, procedures, contact with parents living elsewhere).	0 to 17 years	Australia, states and territories	Irregular, 1997, 2003.
General Social Survey	Survey	ABS	Includes the variable - Support for children outside household	18 years and over	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Four yearly, latest 2002
Marriage and Divorce	Administrative	ABS	Includes characteristics of the husband and wife who are divorcing including number of children under 18 and age of youngest child of the marriage under 18 years.	Age at marriage, Separation and divorce, number of children under 16.	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual, first issue 1984
Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection	Administrative	AIHW	Collects the services provided to clients of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and of the Agencies funded to deliver those services. Includes information about the clients receiving support, information about each SAAP agency, the level of unmet demand for SAAP services and short term or one off assistance provided to homeless people.	All ages	Australia, states and territories	Annual, commenced 1996
Women's Safety Survey	Survey	ABS	The survey provides information on women's safety at home and in the community and, in particular, on the nature and extent of violence against women in Australia. Personal Safety Survey in 2005.	Women 18 and over (whether Experienced abuse since 15). Also whether abused as a child.	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Irregular, 1996, future 2005

## Children and economic disadvantage

Data source	Data type	Data custodian	Description	Age scope (years)	Geographic scope	Frequency
Census of Population and Housing	Census	ABS	Educational attainment (both school and non-school), labour force status, Indigenous status and country of birth, proficiency in English and language spoken at home.	All ages	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Five yearly, latest 2001
Family Characteristics Survey	Survey	ABS	Provides information on the composition of families and households, including demographic, marital status and labour force information. The survey also collects information regarding personal and parental income, educational attainment of parents and child support paid by parents living elsewhere.	0 to 17 years	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Irregular, 1997, 2003 (due for release mid 2004)
General Social Survey	Survey	ABS	Collected information regarding the characteristics of adults living in one family jobless households with children under 15 years of age. The survey also collected information on self assessed health status, educational opportunities and outcomes, employment and voluntary work, family relationships and engagement with wider social networks, personal safety and security, and cultural and recreational activities.	18 years and over	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Four yearly, commenced 2002
Household Income and Expenditure Survey	Survey	ABS	Detailed information about the expenditure, income and household finances, socio-demographic characteristics and labour force and employment characteristics.	15 years and over	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Four to six yearly, 1974-75, 1975-76, 1984, 1988-89, 1993-94, 1998-99
Labour Force Survey	Survey	ABS	The survey provides information on the labour status of one and two parent families including employment status (full-time/part-time), duration of unemployment, occupation and industry, birthplace and hours worked.	15 years and over	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Monthly, commenced 1964
Longitudinal Data Set	Administrative	FaCS	Data on persons receiving welfare payments from FaCS.	All ages	Australian, states and territories	Annual, commenced 1995

Measuring Australia's Learning: A framework for education and training statistics	Information paper	ABS	The framework is a suggested way of thinking about 'learning' (education and training) statistics			2003
National Health Survey	Survey	ABS	Collects information on health status, health related actions taken, health risk factors, demographic and socio-economic characteristics.	0 to 14 years	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Five yearly 1989-1990, 1995, latest 2001, future 2004/05.
Survey of Income and Housing Costs	Survey	ABS	Provides information on source of income, labour force status, relationship in household, household type, educational attainment, marital status and country of birth.	15 years and over	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Monthly, commenced 1994-95, replaced income surveys conducted four yearly 1979 to 1990.

## Children and early learning

Data source	Data type	Data custodian	Description	Age scope (years)	Geographic scope	Frequency
Census of Population and Housing	Census	ABS	Small geographic areas of children's attendance.	All ages	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	5 yearly, latest 2001
Childcare Services Census	Census	FaCS	Data is available on ten services types funded by the Australian Government Child Care Support Program.			Commenced 1986, irregular
Child Care Survey	Survey	ABS	Provides information on the supply and demand for child care, data on demographic variables and family information, child care arrangements, childcare cash rebate, unmet demand for formal care, employer assisted childcare and other topics is also collected.	0 to 11 years	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Three yearly, commenced 1969, latest 2002
Disability, Ageing and Carers	Survey	ABS	Includes extensive information on children under 15 including demographic and family information, information regarding the disability and assistance needed.	All years	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Five yearly, commenced 1981, latest 2003
Growing Up in Australia	Longitudinal survey	FaCS	Longitudinal survey. Belief and expectations of school success and child's outcomes, connection of family to school and child outcomes, impact of child's exposure to books, story telling etc to outcome, what factors impact in early learning.	Less than 12 months to 4 years	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual, commenced 2003
Longitudinal Survey of Indigenous Children	Longitudinal survey	FaCS	<i>Survey in development</i>			n.a.
National Indigenous Preschool Census (NIPC)	Census	DEST	All government preschools and most non-government preschools participate in a yearly census which seeks to determine the total number of Indigenous students enrolled in preschools throughout Australia. The information includes age, sex and sessional details of all Indigenous children, as well as the total number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous enrolments by state and territory.	Preschool aged children	Australia, states and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual, commenced 1983, but comparable data is available from 2001 onwards
Project Good Start	Survey	ACER	A longitudinal study examining the practices and learning experiences that support the early numeracy development of children in the year before school (2002) and the first year of schooling (2003). It will report in 2004.	Year before school	Australia	2002 - 2003

Schools Australia	Administrative	ABS	Data is available for school students, schools, teaching and non-teaching staff. Data available for students includes age, sex, indigenous status, level of school year, category of school attended and state.	School age children	Australia, states and territories	Annual, 1981 (government), 1984 (non-government)
Time Use Survey	Survey	ABS	Time spent on education-related activities also time spent of parents teaching their children at home.	15 years and over	Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland	Five yearly, commenced 1992, latest 1997

## Access to education

Data source	Data type	Data custodian	Description	Age scope (years)	Geographic scope	Frequency
Census of Population and Housing	Census	ABS	Collects information regarding people's educational attainment (both school and non-school), labour force status, Indigenous status and country of birth, proficiency in English and language spoken at home.	All ages	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Five yearly, latest is 2001
Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY)	Longitudinal survey	ACER	Studies the progress of several groups of young Australians as they move from school into post-secondary education and/or work.	15 to 25 years	Australia, states and territories	Annual, commenced 1961
National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC)	Administrative	ABS	The National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) is an aggregation of data from annual State and Federal government School Censuses. It provides information regarding government and non-government primary and secondary schools in Australia. The data collected enables derivation of apparent retention rates, age participation rates and student/teaching staff ratios. Information is available at the state/territory level and also covers Indigenous students.	School aged children	Australia, state and territories	Annual, commenced 1981
MCEETYA National Performance Measurement of Schools	Administrative	MCEETYA	Collects information on student outcomes disaggregated by sex, Indigenous status, language background, geographic location and socio-economic background.			Annual, commenced 2000
Measuring Australia's Learning: A framework for education and training statistics	Information Paper	ABS	The framework is a suggested way of thinking about 'learning' (education and training) statistics.			2003
Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)	Survey	OECD	Collects the knowledge and skills of 15 year olds in the principal industrialised countries. The survey assesses literacy in reading, mathematics and science.	15 years	Australia and International comparisons	Three yearly, commenced 2000

Student Outcomes Survey	Survey	NCVER	Collects information from TAFE students regarding their satisfaction and outcomes from vocational education and training. Information includes general characteristics, employment outcomes, satisfaction with their training, whether they undertook further study and reasons for not undertaking more training.	15 years and over	Australia, states and territories	Annual, commenced 1997 (ABS conducted the survey from 1995 to 1997)
Survey of Aspects of Literacy	Survey	ABS	Covered the information processing skills necessary to use printed material found at work, at home, and in the community. This information is available by socio-economic characteristics, educational attainment, labour force experience and status, parent's educational attainment and occupation, country of birth, languages spoken, respondents perceptions of their English literacy skills, respondents English literacy skill levels, and barriers to English literacy training.	15 to 74 years	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	1996
Survey of Education and Training	Survey	ABS	Collected information from people who were studying in the week prior to the interview, or in the 12 months prior to the interview. Information is available regarding age, country of birth, labour force status, attendance of training in the previous 12 months, English proficiency and education background and intentions.	15 to 64 years	Australia, state and territories	1998
Survey of Education and Work	Survey	ABS	Collects information regarding participation in education in the previous year, labour force characteristics, type of educational institution, level of education of current and previous study, level of highest non-school qualification, level of highest educational attainment, unmet demand for education in current year, and characteristics of apprentices. There is also information available on birthplace and year of arrival and the information is available at single year ages.	15 to 64 years	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual, commenced 1964
Unmet Demand Survey	Survey	AVCC	Collects information on the number of students judged eligible, but failing to obtain an undergraduate higher education place.	School leavers	Australia, States and Territories	Annual, commenced 1985

## Transition to employment

Data source	Data type	Data custodian	Description	Age scope (years)	Geographic scope	Frequency
Apprentices and Trainees	Survey	NCVER	Collects information regarding the number of commencements, completions, withdrawals/cancellations, apprentice and trainee characteristics and training contract characteristics.	15 and over	Australia, States and Territories	Quarterly, commenced 1985
Census of Population and Housing	Census	ABS	Collects information regarding people's educational attainment (both school and non-school), labour force status, Indigenous status and country of birth, proficiency in English and language spoken at home.	All ages	Australia, States and Territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Five yearly, latest is 2001
Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ)	Survey - attached with GDS for bachelor degrees or Postgraduate work by course work	GCCA	Collects information from graduates regarding the course they have just completed.	Graduates	Australia, States and Territories	Annual, commenced in 1993
Graduate Destination Survey (GDS)	Survey	GCCA	Collects information from graduates regarding their labour market status, details of any employment they are in, including starting salary, hours worked etc and information about any further study being undertaken.	Graduates	Australia, States and Territories	Annual, commenced in 1972
Job Search Experience Survey	Survey	ABS	Collects information about unemployed persons' experiences in seeking work, in terms of the steps they have taken to find work and the difficulties they have encountered in finding work. Information regarding birthplace and educational attainment is also collected.  (This survey is a combination of Job search Experience of Unemployed Persons, last run in July 2001 and Successful and Unsuccessful Job Search Experience, last run in July 2000).	15 and over	Australia, State and Territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual, commenced 2002
Labour Force Survey	Survey	ABS	Collects information including labour force status, age, attendance at school or tertiary education institution, country of birth, year of arrival in Australia, participation rates, whether looking for full-time or part-time work (unemployed), duration of unemployment, relationship in household.	15 and over	Australia, State and Territories and lower levels of disaggregation.	Monthly, commenced in 1964



Labour Market Assistance Outcomes	Administrative	DEWR	Outcomes achieved for Job Network services and other Programmes managed by the department.	15-20 and 21-24	Australia	Quarterly
Labour Market and Related Payments	Administrative	DEWR (formerly FaCS)	Numbers of jobseekers receiving income support (by duration on income support).	Under 18 18-20 21-24	Australia	Monthly
Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth	Longitudinal survey	ACER	Studies the progress of several groups of young Australians as they move from school into post-secondary education and/or work.	15 to 25	Australia, States and Territories	Annual, commenced in 1961
Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ)	Survey - attached with GDS for higher degree research graduates	GCCA	Collects information from graduates regarding the course they have just completed.	Graduate	Australia, States and Territories	Annual, commenced in 1999
Student Outcomes Survey	Survey	NCVER	Collects information from TAFE students regarding their satisfaction and outcomes from vocational education and training. Information includes general characteristics, employment outcomes, satisfaction with their training, whether they undertook further study and reasons for not undertaking more training.	15 and over	Australia, States and Territories	Annual, commenced in 1997
Survey of Education and Work	Survey	ABS	Provides information about the educational experience, especially in relation to their labour force status. The survey collects information regarding participation in education in the previous year, labour force characteristics, type of educational institution, level of education of current and previous study, level of highest non-school qualification, level of highest educational attainment, unmet demand for education in current year, and characteristics of apprentices. There is also information available on birthplace and year of arrival and the information is available at single year ages.	15-64	Australia, State and Territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual, commenced 1964
Survey of Employer Views on VET	Survey	NCVER	Collects information from employers regarding their general views on VET, their training practices and related issues.	15 and over	Australia, States and Territories	Biennial, 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2001

## Social participation

Data source	Data type	Data custodian	Description	Age scope (years)	Geographic scope	Frequency
Census of Population and Housing	Census	ABS	Including information regarding people's Australian citizenship, labour force status, Indigenous status, religious affiliation and education.	All ages	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Five yearly, latest 2001
Crime and Safety Survey	Survey	ABS	Perception of problems, fear of crime, behaviour as a result of crime and data relating to household and personal crime.	18 years and over	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Irregular, commenced 1975, latest, 2002, future 2005
General Social Survey	Survey	ABS	Provides information on self assessed health status, educational opportunities and outcomes, employment and voluntary work, use of information technology, family relationships and engagement with wider social networks, personal safety and security, and cultural and recreational activities.	18 years and over	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Four yearly, commenced 2002
Household Income and Labour Dynamic Australia (HILDA)	Longitudinal survey	FaCS, Melbourne Institute	Collects information on education, employment status, employment details, including looking for work, family formation, health, youth issues such as buying a house, future employment prospects.	15 years and over	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Annual, commenced 2001
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)	Survey	ABS	This survey provides information on self assessed health status, educational opportunities and outcomes, employment and voluntary work, use of information technology, family relationships and engagement with wider social networks, personal safety and security, cultural and recreational activities and Indigenous culture and language.	18 years and over	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Six yearly, commenced 2002
Survey of Voluntary Work	Survey	ABS	Information collected in the survey includes rates of participation in voluntary work, characteristics of people who volunteer, the types of organisations they work for, and the activities they undertake.	18 years and over	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Five yearly, commenced 1995, latest 2000
Time Use Survey	Survey	ABS	Collected information on the daily activity patterns of people. It covered education, social participation, recreation and leisure and voluntary work and care activities.	15 years and over	Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland	Five yearly, commenced 1992, latest 1997

Women's Safety Survey	Survey	ABS	Provides information on women's safety at home and in the community and, in particular, on the nature and extent of violence against women in Australia. There is information relating to women aged 18 to 24 and also regarding abuse women have endured since the age of 15 years. There is also information on birthplace and educational attainment. Personal Safety Survey to be conducted in 2005.	Women 18 years and over (whether experienced abuse since 15). Also whether abused as a child.	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Irregular, 1996, future 2005
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## Risk behaviours

Data source	Data type	Data custodian	Description	Age scope (years)	Geographic scope	Frequency
2001 National Drug and Alcohol Research Survey	Survey	AIHW	Contains hospital separations with variables of principle diagnosis, age, sex, area of residence and Indigenous status.	All ages	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	2001
Australian Secondary Students Alcohol and Drug Survey	Survey	Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Victoria	Covers the use of tobacco, alcohol, over the counter medicines (used for non medical purposes) and illicit substances.	12 to 17 years	Australia, states and territories	Triennial, commenced 1984, latest 2002
Causes of Death	Administrative	ABS	Includes post-mortem indicator, drowning indicator and certifier of cause of death, also occupation for those aged over 15 years.	All ages	Australia, states and territories	Annual, 1907 onwards (limited variables)
Child and Adolescent Component of the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing	Survey	ABS	Prevalence of mental health problems and disorders, health related quality of life, service utilisation, health risk behaviour, family cohesion.	4 to 17 years	Australia	Irregular, 1998
Crime and Safety Survey	Survey	ABS	Regarding their perception of problems, fear of crime, behaviour as a result of crime and data relating to household and personal crime.	18 years and over	Australia, states and territories	Irregular, 1975, 1983, 1993, 1998, 2002
General Social Survey	Survey	ABS	Data items included cover health and crime.	18 years and over	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	2002
Illicit Drug Reporting System	Various methods	National Alcohol and Drug Research Centre, DoHA	Monitors the price, purity, availability and patterns of use of the main illicit drugs, as well as acting as an early warning system for emerging trends in illicit drug markets, through a triangulation of three data sources; a quantitative survey of injecting drug users, a qualitative survey of key informants and a synthesis of extant indicator data sources such as Customs data, seizure purity data, arrest data etc.		Australia, states and territories	Commenced 1996 (NSW only) 2000 all States and Territories included
Indigenous Health Survey	Survey	ABS	Includes indicators of health status, health related actions taken, health risk factors, demographic and socio-economic characteristics.	All ages	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Latest 2001, Future 2004/05, 6 yearly thereafter

National Drug Strategy Household Surveys	Survey	AIHW, DoHA	Data collected on drug-related awareness, knowledge and behaviours.	14 years and over	Australia	Irregular, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1998, latest 2001
Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set	Administrative	AIHW	Variables include, date of birth, sex, Indigenous status, for each episode the type, transfer details, last known home suburb and postcode, and reason for exit at the end of the episode.	10-18 years (usually)	Australia, states and territories	Commenced 2004
National Health Survey	Survey	ABS	Includes injury/accidents, contraceptive practices among women.	All ages	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Five yearly 1989-1990, 1995, latest 2001, future 2004/05
National Nutrition Survey	Survey	ABS	Collected information on the food and beverage intake, physical measurements, food related habits and attitudes and food consumption patterns.	Children aged less than 2 years were excluded	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	1995
National Physical Activity Survey	Survey	AIHW	Measures leisure-time physical activity, and to assess knowledge of current public health messages on physical activity.	18 to 75 years	Australia	Irregular, 1997, 1999 and 2000
National Survey of Australian Secondary School Students	Survey	Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University	Surveys government schools. Variables include knowledge and sources of knowledge of the transmission of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, attitudes to HIV, sexual practices and contraception, alcohol consumption and drugs. Background variables include sex, age, year at school, country of birth, years in Australia, parents' country of birth, language spoken at home and location.	Secondary school age students	Australia, state and territories and lower levels of disaggregation	Irregular, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2001
National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing of Adults	Survey	ABS	Provides information on the prevalence of a range of major mental disorders for Australian adults.	18 years and over	Australia	Irregular, 1997
Road Fatalities Australia	Administrative	Australian Transport Safety Bureau	Number of fatalities, monthly by age cohorts.	0 to 16 years, 17 to 20 years, 21 to 25 years	Australia, states and territories	Monthly
Young People and Domestic Violence	Survey	Attorney-Generals Department and the DETYA	Data on young people's attitudes towards domestic violence.	12-20 years	Australia	Irregular, 1999

Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health	Longitudinal survey	University of Newcastle	A 20 year survey designed to explore factors that influence health among Australian women. The study collects data on physical and emotional health; use of health services; health behaviours and risk factors; time use; socio-demographic factors; and life stages and key events.		Australia, states and territories	Commenced 1995
Victims of Recorded Crime	Administrative	ABS	Variables include: victim counts for selected offences, victim details (including age of victim), location of the incident, use of weapon and outcome of police investigation after 30 days.	All ages	Australia, states and territories	Annual, commenced 1993

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