

# **Disability support services 2006–07**

**National data on services provided under the  
Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement**

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# Preface

This report presents data from the 2006–07 Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement National Minimum Data Set (CSTDA NMDS). The 2006–07 financial year marked the nominal end of the third (2002–07) CSTDA. It is therefore fitting that this report includes a special focus chapter which examines trends over the period covered by four NMDS collections (2003–04 to 2006–07).

People who use CSTDA-funded services come from diverse backgrounds and have a range of complex needs associated with disability. This report gives unique insight into the characteristics of this group of consumers and of the types of services they receive, both within 2006–07 and across all four years of available data. Information contained in this report is relevant to funded agencies, service users, government departments and members of the general public.

Penny Allbon  
Director

# Acknowledgments

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The successful completion of the CSTDA NMDS collection in 2006–07 owes much to:

- the service providers and service users who completed questionnaires and provided comments
- all departments, organisations, peak bodies and individuals who provided suggestions or comments
- staff who conducted the collection, from government departments that fund disability services, at the Australian Government and state and territory levels.

Our thanks go to all these people.

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# Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADD	attention deficit disorder
ADL	activities of daily living
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AIL	activities of independent living
Aus Gov	Australian Government (formerly referred to as 'Commonwealth')
AWEC	activities of work, education and community living
CSDA	Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement of 1998
CSTDA	Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement of 2002-07
EP Groups	English Proficiency Groups
FTE	full-time equivalent
MDS	minimum data set
NMDS	national minimum data set
OHS	occupational health and safety

# Symbols

n.a.	not applicable
–	zero, or null cells
0.0	rounded to zero (less than 0.5 but more than zero)

# Summary

In 2006–07, services funded under the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) delivered assistance to over 232,000 people with a disability, accounting for \$4.42 billion of government expenditure. The CSTDA aims at improving the quality of life of people with disability by providing support and assistance across a range of life activities. Specialist disability services funded under the Agreement include accommodation support, community support, community access, respite, and employment services.

This report outlines the characteristics of people who used specialist disability services in 2006–07 and the services they received. The information from the CSTDA National Minimum Data Set (NMDS) used in this report was collected from around 10,000 service outlets around Australia. The 2006–07 NMDS is the fourth collection of full-year data on disability services and coincides with the official end of the third CSTDA. A special focus chapter (Chapter 4) looks at some major trends over the life of the third agreement (from 2003–04 to 2006–07). This was made possible by using linked records, one of the key data enhancements of the third CSTDA.

## Service use

- Community support services (for example, therapy, early intervention and case management) were accessed by almost 100,000 people (43% of service users) making this the most commonly used service group.
- The most commonly used service type was open employment – accessed by almost 60,000 service users (a quarter of all users) in 2006–07. These services provide assistance to people with disability in obtaining and/or retaining paid employment in the open labour market.
- Accommodation support services accounted for 16% of all service users, but the highest proportion of expenditure (47%).

## Service user characteristics

- The median age of service users was 31.5 years; 29.0 years for males and 35.3 years for females. There were more males (59%) than females (41%) accessing services; this equates to approximately 1.4 males for every female.
- Intellectual disability was the most common primary disability (accounting for around 1 in 3 service users), followed by psychiatric disability then physical disability.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples accounted for 3.8% of service users. This is a slightly higher proportion than in the general Australian population aged 0–64 years (3.0%). Intellectual disability was the most common primary disability for Indigenous people. A greater proportion of Indigenous than non-Indigenous service users had multiple disabilities (47% compared with 38%). Almost 12% of Indigenous service users reported four or more significant disability types.
- People with intellectual disability or autism were most likely to have little or no effective communication. In nine out of the twelve disability types, more than 10% of service users had little or no effective means of communication.
- 59% of service users always or sometimes needed help with activities of daily living, 63% with activities of work, education and community living and 68% with activities of independent living. The support profile of 90,073 users who used services in both 2003–04 and 2006–07 (i.e. ongoing service users) shows much higher needs, on average, than other users. Over 70% of these ongoing service users always or sometimes needed support with activities of daily living.

- One-third of service users of working age were employed, with slightly less than one-quarter unemployed. Three out of ten people were not in the labour force.

### **Informal carers**

- Less than half (45%) of service users had an informal carer. The same proportion of informal carers were in Major Cities, though service users in Remote and Very Remote areas had a greater likelihood (54% and 66% respectively) of having an informal carer than service users in other areas.
- Almost two-thirds of informal carers were the service user's mother. Close to a third of all informal carers were parents aged over 45 years.
- There were 7,585 older (65 years and over) parent carers in 2006–07. The majority of these older parent carers were the service user's mother (83%). Close to half (45%) of all service users with an older parent carer were aged 40–49 years; 24% were aged 30–39 years and 21% were aged 50–59 years.

### **Key trends from 2003–04 to 2006–07**

- The estimated number of people accessing CSTDA-funded services has increased by 24% – from 187,800 in 2003–04 to 232,300 in 2006–07.
- Open employment services were the most commonly accessed service type between 2003–04 and 2006–07, followed by case management services.
- Respite services have experienced the highest overall growth in user numbers over the four year period (up by 46%), followed by community support and employment (both up by 25%).
- Almost half (48%) of users who accessed services during 2003–04 continued to access services in 2006–07. These users reported higher levels of support needs than CSTDA service users overall, and a similar level of multiple service use.
- Users aged 45–64 years have consistently increased in number over the 4 years from 2003–04, in both absolute and relative terms, indicating that the overall CSTDA service user population is ageing.
- The proportions of service users born overseas, living alone and accessing individualised funding have increased – in particular, the proportion of users with individualised funding has increased from 17% to 45%.
- Intellectual/learning disability has consistently been the most commonly reported primary disability across all service groups.
- Although the proportion of service users reporting that they always need support in activities of daily living has been stable over the period, there are indications of an increasing level of support need for activities of independent living among CSTDA service users.

### **Response rates and data quality**

- The national service outlet response rate has increased slightly between 2003–04 and 2006–07, from 92% to 93%. Over the same period, the number of service outlets reporting CSTDA NMDS information has increased from 7,976 to 9,472 and the number of agencies has increased from 1,973 to 2,330.
- Data quality has seen some improvements between 2005–06 and 2006–07 in terms of 'not stated' rates for some data items (e.g. Indigenous status, country of birth, living arrangements and primary disability). However, for other items these rates remain very high (e.g. receipt of carer allowance and support needs items).

