

NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICES INFORMATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Standing Committee of Community Services
and Income Security Administrators

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ISBN 0 642 39577 2

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Board Chair

Professor Janice Reid

Director

Dr Richard Madden

Any enquiries about or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Margaret Fisher

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

GPO Box 570

Canberra ACT 2601

Telephone: (02) 6244 1033

Published by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Printed by National Capital Printing

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NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICES INFORMATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1. Introduction

Origin and purposes of the Plan

The need to improve community services data is recognised as a high priority by the Standing Committee of Community Services and Income Security Administrators (SCCSISA). At its October 1997 meeting, SCCSISA asked the National Community Services Information Management Group (NCSIMG) to prepare a draft of the National Community Services Information Development Plan (NCSIDP). The draft was presented to SCCSISA at its meeting on 4 March 1998, and was endorsed as an exposure draft for further consultation with community services government agencies and non-government peak organisations. This Plan incorporates the results of these consultations.

Structure of the Plan

The Plan is organised into seven sections focusing on the role of community services, the national community services policy agenda, the need for national community services data, a framework for community services data development, development strategies, and information development priorities.

2. Community Services in Australia

The role of community services

Community services are a significant sector in Australia's social and economic system.

Community services are provided to:

- *provide support for individuals and groups at the key stages in their lives;*
- *protect the interests of, and provide care for, vulnerable individuals and families to ensure a satisfactory level of functioning and wellbeing; and*
- *invest in community infrastructure, networks and development processes in order that individuals and families can achieve social and economic wellbeing.*

For the purposes of this Plan, the scope of community services is: aged care (including residential and community care), disability services, child care (including preschools), family support services, child welfare (including juvenile justice), supported accommodation assistance, and emergency relief and crisis services.

There are recognised strong links between community services and health services and an emerging understanding of links with housing and other social services. In several jurisdictions, community services, health and housing functions are co-located in one government agency, promoting an integrated human services focus. Coordination in development of community services and health data is assisted by cross memberships between the NCSIMG and its health counterpart, the National Health Information Management Group and between their respective data committees. While the interface between health and community services needs to be fostered, the focus of this Plan is on community services only.

Government and non-government providers, volunteers and families provide community services. Together, these services form a community services system. Many of the values embodied by community services, regardless of who provides them, are fundamentally important to the lives of Australians.

Commonwealth and State governments have a major role in funding the provision of community services, arising from a mandate to ensure basic rights, an acceptable standard of living and a requirement to protect and support the vulnerable in our society. Local governments also fund community services and are important providers of these services.

The way in which formal services are provided is influenced by the division of responsibility of the three levels of governments in Australia and the level of participation of non-government organisations (NGOs). The relative involvement of the Commonwealth, State/Territory and local governments varies from program to program, and the participation of NGOs is also different between programs and between States and Territories. The complexity in community services thus created has contributed to the difficulty in developing a national policy framework for community services, and has also affected the development of national community services data.

Community perceptions about the role of community services and the responsibilities of governments and other service providers have had a significant impact on the development of policy and practice.

The agenda in community services today is characterised by a tension between historical patterns of service provision and the need to respond to current economic and social conditions. Despite the fact that traditional welfare functions make up a decreasing proportion of community services activity and resources, the public often perceives the sector in terms of its statutory functions only.

Community services are inherently influenced by the activities of other sectors. In particular, health, social security, education, housing, justice, and labour market services have important roles to play in supporting individuals, families and communities. Community services complement, and often fill the gap arising from service provision decisions in, other sectors. The higher the number of people marginalised from services of other sectors, the more likely will there be an increase in the number of people entering the community services system.

The non-government sector

There are in excess of 10,000 social welfare organisations in Australia receiving government funding for community services and an unknown number operating without government assistance. In 1995-96 they delivered about 60% of community services and funded 10% from their own funds.

In many community services areas, the non-government sector is predominantly not-for-profit and plays a larger role beyond that of service provider. NGOs often aim to advocate for the needs of their clients and play varying roles with governments in planning, developing and coordinating services. The role of volunteers in the non-government sector is substantial, with national estimates of some 95 million hours of volunteer effort each year.

In other areas, notably childcare and aged care, private for-profit NGOs are very significant service providers.

The relationship between NGOs (both not-for-profit and private for-profit) and government is undergoing change. Many community services are currently in a period of transition from a voluntary system, where charities and other community organisations (by and large) determined the category of need and the way they would provide their service, to a more systemised contracted approach. With the trend towards outsourcing of activity to the non-government sector, including the for-profit sector, their role and significance in service delivery is increasing.

Data on the NGO sector in Australia are scarce but are being improved as part of international efforts to describe this sector better.

3. The National Agenda

Policy directions in community services

A significant challenge for community services in all jurisdictions is to develop policy and practice which are responsive to contemporary social issues. While each State or Territory will have different emphases and imperatives, there are common themes:

- *the increase in the proportion of older Australians in the community*
- *changing patterns of family formation and structure*
- *contemporary pressures on family care, including the lengthened dependency of children and the increased participation of women in paid work*
- *the increasing importance of carers and the need for carer support*
- *changing labour market trends*
- *changes in the profile of disability*
- *changes in the profile of poverty*
- *the disadvantages suffered by people in remote rural areas*
- *the persistence of poor social conditions among Indigenous people.*

And in terms of program design and service provision:

- *policy in both health and community services, consumer choice and community expectation have created the shift towards home or community-based care and services rather than institutional care;*
- *from the legacy of past welfare practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have emerged principles of self-determination, collaboration and the development of new service approaches;*
- *policy shifts, e.g. in child protection, have seen responses move away from the traditional intervention towards supportive responses based on safety, risk and needs; and*
- *emphasis on preventive, development and advocacy strategies as well as remedial measures.*

Key reforms in service delivery

In addition to the sector-specific issues, community services must also respond to the international and national trends in the organisation, management and delivery of human services.

Outcome-focus

Historically, community services have been organised on a program basis. The impact of planning around specific service responses is that the shape of services on the ground often does not reflect the needs of clients and their family circumstances. Program boundaries create barriers to good practice and effectively cocoon funds inside those boundaries.

In recent years major changes in foci in both the health and community services arenas have emphasised a patient/client focus, including outcomes, the need for flexible resource provision, the development of locally appropriate services, and measures to effect continuity of care or support and effective service pathways. Reforms in aged care and child protection are good examples.

Case management and care coordination

There is increasing recognition that existing practice is least effective for those in the community with complex needs and/or conditions. The key focus for reform is formal coordination of the required mix and level of services and the increasing involvement of individuals and families in decisions about their care. The challenges around coordination are intensified in the community services sector by the fact that there is a mixed economy of funders and providers.

The Commonwealth and State/Territory governments have supported a number of coordinated care trials for people with multiple service needs. Funds based on existing service utilisation are cashed into a pool and are used to purchase and coordinate packages of services based on an agreed care plan.

Output-based budgeting

Most Australian States and Territories have adopted some form of output-based budgeting, ranging from changes in reporting to wholesale changes in the way that agencies are managed. The change in focus shifts attention to the results achieved rather than on resources consumed, as in traditional input arrangements. In association with moves towards accrual accounting practices, the output focus provides a clearer picture of the business of government including the true costs of producing and supplying services.

Funder-Purchaser-Provider model

Many government services across Australia are being reoriented in light of the funder-purchaser-provider model and the demands of national competition policy. This model seeks to establish clear separations of function and role in order to maximise accountability and minimise conflicts of interest in government agencies.

Purchasing and contestability

Alongside the other changes in approach have been major changes in funding, with the movement from population-based, submission-driven or program funding to purchasing arrangements which allows for:

- *increased consumer choice by placing funding directly with the user, rather than with the service provider (e.g. child care);*
- *direct service delivery being provided by non-government providers, either for-profit or not-for-profit, through a tendering or service contract arrangement (e.g. SAAP, HACC).*

Improved data are required to support a system of performance indicators for the measurement of the effectiveness and efficiency of services. These measurements are required for contract management as well as for general monitoring of the social conditions of the people and the effects of service utilisation.

4. The need for national community services data

The uses of national data

Quality data are needed to inform community discussion and decision-making. They are essential to government agencies in the community services sector as well as community groups for policy development and service planning and monitoring. Consistent data, which allow valid comparison between jurisdictions or service providers, are also essential to Federal and State central agencies such as the Productivity Commission, the Commonwealth Grants Commission and Commonwealth and State Treasuries.

The development of consistent national community services information will improve access to quality information by the community, governments as service funders and/or purchasers, service providers, consumers of services and NGOs.

Availability of quality community services information will provide answers to fundamental questions posed by each of these groups regarding the provision of community services:

The community (government agencies, NGOs, community advocates and the population) needs to know the extent of need for services, what services are available, whether there are sufficient services available, whether, as taxpayers, they are getting value for money, and whether the public good is being met. The community is interested in answers to accountability and performance questions.

Governments as service funders/purchasers seek to identify who needs the services, what types of services are needed, how much should be purchased/provided at what cost and quality, and how families can be enabled to support themselves.

Service providers (government and non-government agencies and carers) seek to ask what current and future needs are, where the services should be located, how the services can be coordinated and integrated and whether there are barriers to provision of services. Answers to these questions assist strategic planning and help in the development of policies and services.

Service users (including carers) have a vital concern to know eligibility criteria, how services are delivered, the quality of the services, and whether they are getting what they are entitled to.

Non-government peak organisations and advocacy groups are concerned about who needs the services, comparisons between States and countries, and whether the needs of people are being met without being restricted by program boundaries.

The concerns naturally overlap and are included to indicate the depth and breadth of interest by all sectors in having accurate, consistent and comparable information as the basis for decision-making.

Policy and practice challenges

Clearly, there are significant challenges in the contemporary policy and practice context for community services. There are shifts in focus towards outcomes, performance and service improvement. There are also critical challenges of continuity of support and care and coordination within and across sectors. Each reform has significant implications for information management:

- *In outcome measurement—the challenge for information management is to be able to collect, analyse and report on outcome measures which will often require more than the traditional data collections can provide.*
- *In output-based/purchasing systems—a system-wide approach to information management will enable greater clarity around what goods or services (i.e. the outputs) are required by the purchaser, as well as clarification, on a readily comparable basis, of the quantity, quality and cost of these outputs delivered by the provider.*
- *Systems that can integrate health, community service and related service information into a single, client-based, accessible point of reference are fundamental to the successful implementation of these reforms.*

Micro-economic reform and measures to improve client outcomes have been key policy objectives driving changes in the management and delivery of health and community services in each jurisdiction. More recently, there has been the emergence of national reform processes such as the Report on Government Service Provision. This is undertaken by the Productivity Commission. The report presents information relating to the effectiveness and efficiency (cost) of a number of government-funded social services. The production of this report has been a major driver in the development of national performance information. As the *1999 Report on Government Service Provision* shows, there remains a serious lack of quality and comparable data across key areas of community services, relating to both effectiveness and efficiency criteria. A system-wide approach is required to establish core data sets and comparability across program areas.

Integrating data development

Data development is a pivotal part of the process of improving information. Throughout Australia there is currently substantial data development activity being undertaken in the community services sector. This represents a considerable investment of time and resources by the many agencies involved. Within the current data development activity there is considerable duplication of effort and lack of coordination, resulting in inconsistent definitions and data standards, both within and across service sectors and jurisdictions. There are potential benefits, including cost savings, to all agencies, providers and clients from a structured approach to the development and collection of national data, by minimising duplication in data-related activities.

A major objective is the development of nationally consistent data. This will improve the quality of data by reducing the need to map, re-enter and translate data. The establishment of national common core and minimum data sets will reduce the burden on data providers, including clients. The use of nationally consistent data will also reduce the cost of developing, collecting, aggregating and analysing data. It should be noted, however, that developing nationally consistent definitions and data standards is a complex, ongoing matter, as service models change.

The factors driving this data development are, however, not homogeneous in their objectives. The community services sector is seeking good quality data to improve the quality of services and outcomes for its clients and to demonstrate to funders the level and type of need for services. Funding agencies wish to analyse and compare providers. Other agencies are seeking improved data to measure performance and allow efficient allocation of resources. The use of performance measures without adequate supporting data for the indicators runs the risk of wrong decisions being made. Quality data are required in order to minimise the danger in making invalid conclusions and comparisons.

IT infrastructure

The current level of investment in IT infrastructure in the community services sector at the community, service provider and government level is considered to be a constraint on the development of adequate information systems. The value of improved data will be considerably increased by the ability of the community services sector to report reliably and in a timely manner. Much of this added value will depend on the data providers in the service and support area, in particular, having access to adequate IT systems. Addressing the infrastructure issue at the same time as the content issue is being developed will considerably enhance the benefits flowing from this Plan.

5. A framework for developing community services data

A framework of community services information development should provide a picture of the type of the data and their uses across the key foci of:

- *population wellbeing, which provides status reports for the population and its subgroups in respect of support and care needs and demands;*
- *service provision, which represents the inputs and outputs of the service sector and a profile of the service environment;*
- *service utilisation, which represents the pattern of service uptake and client characteristics across the community services and related sectors; and*
- *client/carer outcomes, which represent the intended results of service interventions for clients and their carers.*

The framework is represented in the following matrix. The diagram indicates the type of data required, the possible sources of data and the usefulness of the data for policy and administrative purposes.

Diagram 1: A framework for community services information

	Population Wellbeing	Service Provision	Service Utilisation	Client/Carer Outcomes
Types of data	Extent of need Profile of need Priority of need	Expenditure Service outputs Unit costs	Utilisation rates Profile of users Linkage Access & gateways	Effectiveness Quality Appropriateness
Examples of data sources	Population censuses Surveys Waiting lists	Administrative data Evaluations Special collections Special surveys Monitoring	Surveys Administration data	Quality assurance data Accreditation reports Evaluation studies Special collections
Usefulness	Needs analysis Targeting Priority setting Core business/obligation of the State Public good	Eligibility Efficiency	Access & uptake Inter-sectoral links Service coordination Effectiveness	Effectiveness for the individual and the carer Appropriateness of programs

Sector-specific data

The framework can also be applied to each of the sectors within the community services field to provide an analysis of current data availability/development activity. Appendices A to H summarise recent national level government data collections and current data development activities and provide the information needed for the analysis below (see also Diagram 2).

A substantial amount of data is also collected by NGOs for their own use in addition to those provided to governments, particularly by large non-government service providers. While Diagram 2 covers only national collections by Commonwealth and State governments, an audit and listing of collections of national significance by NGOs and the local government sector would be useful and could be attempted in the future.

Both aged care and disability services sectors have benefited from quality data from the 5 yearly national ABS survey of disability, ageing, and carers. Both service sectors also have established administrative data collections, and annual data on service provision and utilisation are available and published.

Quality assurance programs in aged care, including accreditation, also generate some data on the quality of the services and hence some indication of outcomes

for clients. The Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC) has developed new data collections in the aged care area as part of the recent changes to the residential aged care program. In the home and community care (HACC) sector, a number of data development projects are funded by HACC officials, including the development of a national minimum data set and quality measures instrument for national service standards.

Disability data development is assisted by the Network for the Commonwealth-State Disability Agreement (CSDA) National Minimum Data Set and the AIHW's Disability Data Research and Advisory Group. Work is in progress at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to test suitable questions on disability for possible inclusion in the 2001 population census.

In the supported accommodation area, a national data collection system and a research program have been established for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The national data collection provides data annually on service provision and utilisation. Some data on short-term client outcomes are also available. However, data on homelessness and the need for supported accommodation and related services are not developed. Conceptual issues in measuring homelessness are being addressed by the ABS as part of their population census development, and by the SAAP Data and Research Advisory Committee.

In the childcare and preschool area, survey data on the use of childcare services are available from ABS childcare surveys, and administrative data are available from annual censuses of childcare services conducted by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS). Accreditation procedures for childcare services also provide data on the quality of services provided. Preschool data are not well developed and, with the integration of childcare and preschool services, there is a need to develop comparable data across these two sub-sectors. There is also a need to improve the comparability between ABS population survey data and administrative by-product data. The NCSIMG has recently agreed to establish a Child Care Data Development Group, chaired by FaCS, to address these issues.

In the area of child protection, the AIHW is funded by States and Territories to develop, collate and publish national data on child protection. There have been significant changes in recent years in child protection practices in a number of States. These changes have affected data comparability and have necessitated changes to data definitions and interpretations. Many performance indicators published by the Review of Government Service Provision are not comparable. A Child Protection and Support Services Data Development Group has been established by the NCSIMG to improve the comparability of data, to review the performance indicators including unit cost analyses, to report on support services, and to review AIHW publications.

In the area of family support, FaCS is developing a national information system to assist the management of its Family Relationship Services Program. The program includes family and relationship counselling, family and child mediation, marriage and relationship education, and family skills training. Other data activities in the family support sub-sector are limited.

Data for the remaining sectors in Diagram 2 are generally not available and there are few developmental activities. These areas are juvenile justice and welfare (except children under care and protection orders) and emergency relief and crisis services (except supported accommodation). The AIHW has initiated small scale scoping studies on crisis services (with Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS)) and juvenile justice and welfare (with the assistance of the ABS).

Diagram 2: Community services information: data availability and development activities

	Population Wellbeing	Service Provision	Service Utilisation	Client/Carer Outcomes
Aged Care	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/High
Disability Services	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/High	Low/Medium
Childcare & Preschool	Medium/High (Childcare) Low/Low (Preschool)	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/Medium
Supported Accommodation	Low/Low	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/High
Child Protection & Welfare	Low/Low	Medium/High	Low/Medium	Low/Medium
Juvenile Justice/Welfare	Low/Low	Low/Medium	Low/Low	Low/Low
Family Support	Low/Medium (FaCS family support services) Low/Low (other)	Medium/High (FaCS family support services) Low/Low (other)	Medium/High (FaCS family support services) Low/Low (other)	Medium/High (FaCS family support) Low/Low (other)
Emergency Relief & Crisis Services	Low/Low	Low/Low	Low/Low	Low/Low
Community Development & Advocacy	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

The ratings represent the assessment made of data availability/development activity.

Sector-wide data

A number of groups of community services activities are not specific to the community services sub-sectors and are not directly targeted to clients. These are nevertheless important activities to be taken into account in an information development plan.

Examples of these are carers and their caring activities, community development including advocacy, and financial data on corporate activities such as administration, training, research and development. Carer information is available from evaluation studies and ABS surveys, but these sources are insufficient for the regular monitoring of the large contribution of carers to community services. Inadequate information is available on community development and advocacy activities. Financial data, in particular those relating to corporate activities, are often not consistently defined and collected across agencies and jurisdictions.

6. The Community Services Information Development Plan: Strategies

Strategy One: Strategic data development activity in the community services sectors

The above framework and analysis can assist in the identification of data development activities which are of the highest priority and are unlikely to be developed within existing allocated resources. A key principle underpinning the national arrangements is the need to build on existing activity rather than duplicating. In preparatory work for this planning exercise, the AIHW surveyed recent and ongoing data collections, analysed development activity nationally and identified projects that have national significance or implication. These projects are outlined in Appendices A to H in the context of the draft framework presented above. Resource allocation for data development priorities should take into account data availability and development already in place.

There is an ongoing need to keep abreast of the developments within each jurisdiction and the non-government sector. The NCSIMG should play a key role in developing periodic overviews on data availability and development. In addition, the Data Committee that reports to the NCSIMG must maintain the links it has already forged with the groups undertaking data development activities with a national focus or with national implications. There is now increasing acceptance of the use of data to develop performance indicators. Links with coordinating agencies, e.g. the Productivity Commission, are needed to keep abreast of indicator development work.

It is important for the Development Plan overall to advance across the four focus areas of population wellbeing, service provision, service utilisation and client outcomes, as well as in those community services sectors requiring continuing and supplementary support. It is also important that carer information be considered in the development of data in each of the relevant community services areas.

The compilation of financial data is a matter that cuts across all areas, and the quality of these data needs to be improved.

There is a need to recognise that there is a lack of improvement in the poor conditions of Indigenous people and a lack of knowledge about the services provided to and received by them. Appendix I shows current data development activities regarding the Indigenous population.

Strategy Two: Building national data infrastructure

In order to achieve a nationally integrated and coordinated approach to the development of information for community services, the following infrastructure developments should be advanced.

Version 1.0 of the National Community Services Data Dictionary and Information Model should be enhanced to support the development and identification of compatible data items and provide a structure for information systems development. The dictionary provides the basis for consistent national data. The model will assist in identifying data priorities to meet specific information needs and help identify gaps in community services information.

A national classification of community services was developed by the AIHW in conjunction with Victoria and the National Community Services Data Committee, and was used by the ABS in its national survey of the community services industry. The classification of community services is essential for understanding the structure and the size of the community services sector. It is also important for the description of the level and type of services provided to and received by clients. The classification thus has considerable potential to improve the quality of community

services data by enabling consistency in data collected by various government and non-government agencies. It is necessary to evaluate the use made of the classification and to revise it based on the experience of its use.

Development of linked data capacity is essential for the understanding of the interrelationships between services and client pathways. Clients often use multiple services within an organisation, within a services program and across programs. Data linkage supports the development of services that provide continuity of care. The capacity to link data would greatly enhance the usefulness of the data and allow the monitoring of the usage of services by clients.

Efforts are being made in several data collections in the community services sector to introduce linkage keys. These linkage keys are designed for statistical purposes only and they do not identify individuals. Statistical uses of data do not require a 100% match in record linkage.

Linkage of the type described above (for analytical and research purposes, not for administrative or regulatory purposes) can, and should, be done in ways that protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals.

Current data development activities directed towards building national data infrastructure are shown at Appendix J.

Strategy Three: Protocols and practices which underpin data development

Significant work needs to be advanced in respect to protocols on privacy, confidentiality and informed consent. Increasing use of data, in particular linked data, to measure service performance and client outcomes and advances in computer capabilities have increased the need to protect personal and other confidential information. There are also issues around warehousing and exchange of data that need to be addressed. The AIHW and the Victorian Department of Human Services have projects in progress that will inform the national agenda.

Community services data are increasingly being collected by NGOs. There are important issues in terms of accessing and using these data.

Strategy Four: Consultation with consumers and service providers

Involvement by consumers and providers in decision-making about the development and use of community services information is essential to ensure that the information is of the greatest possible relevance and that the concerns of consumers and providers come to the attention of information developers.

Such concerns include:

- *quality of data collections*
- *privacy and confidentiality*
- *use of data collections*
- *the cost and burden of data collection.*

The involvement of consumers and providers also introduces a rigour to information development that ensures information collection is purposeful and the minimum necessary to achieve its objectives. Mechanisms to ensure consumer and provider involvement should be considered in any major data development work in each of the community services sub-sectors.

7. Information development priorities

Data development: community services sectors

As discussed, the levels of data availability and data development activity differ between community services sectors. Considerable efforts are being made in the aged care, disability services and supported accommodation sectors in developing data, and there is a medium level of quality data being made available. Data development in these priority areas is in progress, and resources have been allocated for this purpose. However, carer information should be considered as part of the data development effort in each of the relevant community services sectors.

The priorities, in terms of additional effort required, are in the following sectors:

1. Indigenous population

The poor social conditions of Indigenous people have persisted. While some wellbeing data on Indigenous people are available from ABS population censuses and the 1993 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey, data on services provided to and used by Indigenous people are very inadequate. Limited and inadequate data currently available do not allow a reliable picture to be drawn on the degree of exclusion and disadvantage suffered by Indigenous people. Quality data are not available to adequately identify mainstream and special targeted services access by Indigenous people, and the appropriateness and adequacy of services provided to Indigenous people cannot be fully examined.

The introduction of a standard Indigenous identifier to data collections in the community services sector is a high priority. The SCCSISA initiated a broad-based analysis on the issue of services to Aboriginal families and communities in October 1997; consideration of the need for more comprehensive data is included in this exercise.

In 1997, the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council endorsed the Aboriginal and Torres Islander Health Information Plan and is developing a plan to implement its recommendations. More recently, in April 1998, the then Department of Health and Family Services, ABS and AIHW organised a workshop on Indigenous disability data. The workshop made five recommendations to the then Minister for Family Services for the then improvement of Indigenous disability data, including a process of consultation with key Indigenous people and organisations for the development of a comprehensive plan for Indigenous disability data collection and reporting.

2. Child protection and welfare

Effort is required to progress data development work to cater for changes in the child protection and welfare sector. Resources are available to undertake some of the following priority work under the NCSIMG Child Protection and Supported Services data development group:

- *review key performance indicator framework for Council of Australian Governments (COAG) report*
- *review AIHW publications*
- *report on support services*
- *review of child protection data.*

Further effort is required to develop estimates of unit costs of child protection services and to measure the need for and the provision and use of child protection-related support services.

3. Juvenile justice and welfare

Juvenile justice and the welfare systems are both involved in the administration of programs and services for children and youths who come into contact with authorities. No national data on juvenile justice are collected, and available national data on juveniles subject to legal orders and arrangements are limited to those on children in care and protective orders. There is a need to develop data that address policy and service delivery issues in each of the areas separately and the interrelationship between the two.

4. Family support services

Family support services include services such as family, marriage and relationship counselling, mediation and education, parenting education, family skills training and in-home and community support, financial information and referral, neighbourhood houses, etc. The funding and provision of family support services is complex and involves all jurisdictions and NGOs. While a number of State, Territory and Commonwealth government departments have well-developed data collections relating to their jurisdiction (an important example is the development of FAMnet data by the FaCS), there has not been an attempt to develop a national data collection. This is an important priority, particularly given the interrelationship between these services and others, such as child protection and crisis accommodation and services.

5. Emergency relief and crisis services

The SAAP National Data Collection provides information on services provided to people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Some data are available on financial emergency relief. Data are, however, not available on a large number of crisis and emergency services outside the SAAP program and financial relief. All levels of government and NGOs are involved in the provision of such 'safety-net' type of services that are targeted to adults as well as children in vulnerable situations. Information is required to understand the need for, the availability of and output from the range of such services.

6. Compilation of financial data

Financial data such as the costs of infrastructure and other corporate activities such as capital investment, administration, research and development, etc. need to be estimated so that adequate cost analysis, including unit cost analysis can be undertaken. The compilation of such information needs to be consistent with established accounting principles already in use.

7. Performance indicators in community services

Performance indicators are widely used in the assessment of the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of services provided. They are often included in service agreements to ensure value for money and to monitor the success of programs in achieving their objectives. Performance indicators are being developed and reported in various government reports, agency annual reports, and reports of service providers. There is a need to assess the appropriateness and quality of currently available performance indicators in terms of their usefulness in supporting policy development and program design, and also in terms of the availability of data to support the indicators and the impact on data development priorities.

Data development: infrastructure projects

1. Data Dictionary and Model

Version 1.0 of the National Community Services Data Dictionary and Information Model has been developed within a very short period of time. Its current scope is limited and needs to be made more comprehensive. Enhancement of the Data Dictionary will draw on the experience in using this initial version.

2. National Classification of Community Services

The National Classification was published in mid-1997, and has been used by the ABS in the survey of the community services industry. It is being assessed for trial use by some government and non-government agencies. It is necessary to evaluate the use made of these classifications and to revise it based on the experience of its use.

3. Data linkage, data collection and dissemination protocols and privacy issues

Data linkage for statistical purposes is a key advancement for data collection and usage. Issues of personal privacy and data confidentiality are of great sensitivity in the community. There is a need for protocols consistent with Commonwealth and State privacy principles to be developed. Thus, careful justification and wide discussion and debate will be necessary. In addition, specific consideration must be given to legal and technical methods of enhancing the confidentiality of linked and linkable information and the secure storage of the linkage and encryption method and the linked data.

8. Summary

The development of quality data in the community services sector is an important and urgent task. This Development Plan identifies the rationale for an increase in effort in data development, a framework for progressing the task and a set of priorities for the next 3-5 years.

APPENDIX A

National data collections and development activities conducted by government:

Aged Care

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
Population Wellbeing	Census of Population	Information on characteristics of all members of the Australian population.	5-yearly	ABS
	Community Care Classification	Tool to classify HACC clients' needs and services received.	Stage 1: 1997/98; later stages to follow	HACC officials
	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers	Information on people with disabilities and their carers, their need for and use of services. Redesign of survey to reflect national data development.	Last survey 1993; next survey 1998	ABS
Service Provision	FAMnet	Data on family relationship services provided to clients.	To commence 1999	FaCS
	NIS (National Information System)	Data on community legal services.	Ongoing	FaCS
	National Survey of Voluntary Work	Estimates of the number of people undertaking voluntary work, activities performed, time spent and field of voluntary work.	1995	ABS
	National Community Services Labour Force Data	Statistics and analysis of community services labour force from ABS and other sources.	1997	AIHW
	National Survey of Time Use	Information on use of time, including time spent in voluntary work and other community participation. Data provide a measure of unpaid work in the community and particularly quantify the time spent in formal voluntary work and informal caring.	1998	ABS
	National Community Services Industry Survey	Information on income, expenditure and labour force of community services.	1997	ABS
	Residential Classification Scale	New care classification instruments for residents in aged care facilities.	Ongoing	HACC Officials
	Residential Aged Care Facilities Data Set	Previously Nursing Home and Hostel data set.	Ongoing	DHAC

Continued.

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
	Community Aged Care Package Survey	Information on service provision and client characteristics.	1996	DHAC
	HACC Service Provision Data Collection	Data on services provided by HACC agencies.	Ongoing	DHAC States and Territories
Service Utilisation	HACC: Standards Instrument	Develop measurements of performance of services against HACC standards.	1997/98	HACC Officials AIHW
	HACC Minimum Data Set	New data set to collect information on characteristics of users of HACC services and patterns of service utilisation. (Intended to replace and enhance the HACC Services Provision and User Characteristics data collections).	1997/98	HACC Officials AIHW
	FAMnet	Data on family relationship services provided to families.	To commence 1999	FaCS
	NIS (National Information Service)	Data on community legal services.	Ongoing	FaCS
	Census of Population	Information on characteristics of all members of the Australian population.	5-yearly	ABS
	National Community Services Industry Survey	Information on income, expenditure and labour force of community services.	1997	ABS
	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers	Information on people with disabilities and their carers, their need for and use of services. Redesign of survey to reflect national data development.	Last survey 1993; next survey 1998	ABS
	Community Aged Care Package Survey	Information on service provision and client characteristics.	1996	DHAC
Client-Carer Outcomes	Community Care Classification	Tool to classify HACC clients' needs and services received.	Stage 1: 1997/98; & later stages to follow	HACC officials
	HACC User Characteristics Data Collection	Data on characteristics of users of HACC services.	Ongoing	DHAC States and Territories
	Residential Classification Scale	New care classification instruments for residents in aged care facilities.	Ongoing	DHAC
	HACC Minimum Data Set	New data set to collect information on characteristics of users of HACC services and patterns of service utilisation. (Intended to replace and enhance the HACC Services Provision and User Characteristics data collections).	1997/98	HACC Officials AIHW

Continued.

Title	Description	Time	Agencies
Community Aged Care Packages Data	Data on client groups and services.	Ongoing	DHAC
Aged Care Assessment Program National Minimum Data Set	Information on persons assessed by Geriatric Assessment Teams.	Ongoing	DHAC
Home & Community Care Service: quality measures	Develop measurements of quality of services against HACC standards.	1997/98	HACC Officials
HACC Minimum Data Set	Information on HACC services and client characteristics.	1997/98	HACC Officials AIHW
Day Therapy Centre Survey 1996	Data collection on the operations of 142 Day Therapy Centres providing services for frail aged people.	1997	DHFS
Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers	Redesign of survey to reflect national data development.	1998	ABS

APPENDIX B

National data collections and development activities conducted by government:

Disability Services

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
Population Wellbeing	Census of Population	Information on characteristics of all members of the Australian population.	5-yearly	ABS
	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers	Information on people with disabilities and their carers, their need for and use of services. Redesign of survey to reflect national data development.	Last survey 1993; next survey 1998	ABS
	International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH)	Input to revision of the ICIDH information on characteristics and needs of people with a disability, older persons and carers.	Ongoing	AIHW and DDRAG
Service Provision	Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service Case Classification Project	Development of client classification system based on a standard assessment of client needs.	1997	DHFS
	National Survey of Voluntary Work	Estimates of the number of people undertaking voluntary work, activities performed, time spent and field of voluntary work.	1995	ABS
	National Community Services Labour Force Data	Statistics and analysis of community services labour force from ABS and other sources.	1997	AIHW
	National Survey of Time Use	Information on use of time, including time spent in voluntary work and other community participation. Data provide a measure of unpaid work in the community and particularly quantify the time spent in formal voluntary work and informal caring.	1997	ABS
	National Community Services Industry Survey	Information on income, expenditure and labour force of community services.	1997	ABS
Service Utilisation	Commonwealth/ State Disability Agreement Minimum Data Set	Enhancement of the CSDA MDS in relation to the range of data items included, classifications used, and collection protocol.	1997/98	AIHW FaCS States and Territories
	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers	Information on people with disabilities and their carers, their need for and use of services. Redesign of survey to reflect national data development.	Last survey 1993; next survey 1998	ABS

Continued.

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
	National Information Management System for disability employment service	Redevelopment and enhancement of NIMS for open employment services.	Ongoing	FaCS AIHW
Client-Carer Outcomes	Commonwealth/ State Disability Agreement Minimum Data Set	Enhancement of the CSDA MDS in relation to the range of data items included, classifications used, and collection protocol.	Ongoing	AIHW FaCS States and Territories
	International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH)	Input to revision of the ICIDH information on characteristics and needs of people with a disability, older persons and carers.	Ongoing	AIHW and DDRAG
	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers	Five-yearly national household survey. Being redesigned to reflect national data development.	Next survey 1998	ABS
	National Information Management System	Redevelopment and enhancement of NIMS for open employment services.	Ongoing	FaCS AIHW

APPENDIX C

National data collections and development activities conducted by government:

Supported Accommodation

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
Population Wellbeing	Census of Population	Information on characteristics of all members of the Australian population.	5-yearly	ABS
Service Provision	National SAAP Data Collection	National data collection on clients of the SAAP program, including supplementary collections on casual clients, families and unmet demand.	Ongoing	DRAC /AIHW
	Welfare Services Expenditure Data	Data from the ABS and the Commonwealth Grants Commission on government expenditure on welfare services analysed and published. Methods for estimating expenditure by the private sector will be further developed.	Ongoing	AIHW
	National Survey of Voluntary Work	Estimates of the number of people undertaking voluntary work, activities performed, time spent and field of voluntary work.	1995	ABS
	National Community Services Labour Force Data	Statistics and analysis of community services labour force from ABS and other sources.	1997	AIHW
	National Survey of Time Use	Information on use of time, including time spent in voluntary work and other community participation. Data provide a measure of unpaid work in the community and particularly quantify the time spent in formal voluntary work and informal caring.	1997	ABS
	SAAP Administrative Data Collection	Administrative data collection from State governments.	Ongoing	DRAC/ AIHW
Service Utilisation	National Data Collection	National data collection on clients of the SAAP program, including supplementary collections on casual clients, families and unmet demand.	Ongoing	DRAC/ AIHW
Client-Carer Outcomes	Data Dictionary	Investigate integration of SAAP data dictionary with the NCS Data Dictionary.	Ongoing	DRAC/ AIHW
	National Data Collection	National data collection on clients of the SAAP program, including supplementary collections on casual clients, families and unmet demand.	Ongoing	DRAC/ AIHW

APPENDIX D

National data collections and development activities conducted by government:

Child Care & Preschool

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
Population Wellbeing	Census of Population	Information on characteristics of all members of the Australian population.	5-yearly	ABS
	National Information Strategy for Child Care	To improve and complement existing information systems, to better inform child care providers' decisions and to ensure parents have the necessary information to make appropriate choices about their use of child care.	1997	FaCS
	Healthwiz - expansion to cover child care	Childcare planning data are incorporated into Healthwiz to enable PC-based table production of Childcare Census and Needs Based planning statistics for planning, policy development and briefing.	Ongoing	FaCS
Service Provision	Welfare Services Expenditure Data	Data from the ABS and the Commonwealth Grants Commission on government expenditure on welfare services analysed and published. Methods for estimating expenditure by the private sector will be further developed.	Ongoing	AIHW
	National Survey of Voluntary Work	Estimates of the number of people undertaking voluntary work, activities performed, time spent and field of voluntary work.	1995	ABS
	National Community Services Labour Force Data	Statistics and analysis of community services labour force from ABS and other sources.	1997	AIHW
	Child Care System	This payments system provides data on expenditure and other data for planning.	Ongoing	FaCS
	National Survey of Time Use	Information on use of time, including time spent in voluntary work and other community participation. Data provide a measure of unpaid work in the community and particularly quantify the time spent in formal voluntary work and informal caring.	1997	ABS
	Child Care data development	Investigate the variety of services programs and policies in the States and Territories including data definitions/collections within the child care sector.	1997/98	AIHW

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
	Child Care Census	Census of childcare providers, providing details on supply and use of formal childcare under the Children's Services Program.	Annual	FaCS
Service Utilisation	National Child Care Survey	3-yearly survey of use of childcare services. Details on demand for and use of formal and informal childcare.	Every 3 years; next survey 1999	ABS
	Child Care Census	Census of childcare providers, providing details on supply and use of formal childcare services under the Children's Services Program.	Annual	FaCS
Client-Carer Outcomes	National Child Care Survey	3-yearly survey of use of childcare services. Details on demand for and use of formal and informal childcare and preschool.	Every 3 years; next survey 1999	ABS
	Child Care Census	Census of childcare providers, providing details on supply and use of formal childcare under the Children's Services Program.	Annual	FaCS
	Quality Improvement & Accreditation System (QIAS)	The system provides data on the rating of childcare providers according to accreditation principles.	Ongoing	FaCS
	National Indigenous Pre-School Census	National census of all Indigenous preschool students.	Annual	DETYA

APPENDIX E

National data collections and development activities conducted by government:

Child Protection & Welfare

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
Population Wellbeing	—	—	—	—
Service Provision	Child Protection National Minimum Data Set	Enhancement of data consistency and definition. Development of counting rules and data dictionaries on data collections.	Ongoing	AIHW States and Territories
	National Survey of Voluntary Work	Estimates of the number of people undertaking voluntary work, activities performed, time spent and field of voluntary work.	1995	ABS
	National Community Services Labour Force Data	Statistics and analysis of community services labour force from ABS and other sources.	1997	AIHW
	National Survey of Time Use	Information on use of time, including time spent in voluntary work and other community participation. Data provide a measure of unpaid work in the community and particularly quantify the time spent in formal voluntary work and informal caring.	1997	ABS
Service Utilisation	Child Protection National Minimum Data Set	Enhancement of data consistency and definition. Development of counting rules and data dictionaries on data collections.	Ongoing	AIHW States and Territories
Client-Carer Outcomes	Child Protection National Minimum Data Set	Enhancement of data consistency and definition. Development of counting rules and data dictionaries on data collections.	Ongoing	AIHW States and Territories

APPENDIX F

National data collections and development activities conducted by government:

Juvenile Justice/Welfare

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
Population Wellbeing	Census of Population	Information on characteristics of all members of the Australian population.	5-yearly	ABS
Service Provision	Welfare Services Expenditure Data	Data from the ABS and the Commonwealth Grants Commission on government expenditure on welfare services analysed and published. Methods for estimating expenditure by the private sector will be further developed.	Ongoing	AIHW
	Youth Justice Information System costing and options of upgrade project	To review the Youth Justice Information System and specify and cost the options for extension of the system State-wide. The system will record relevant data arising from the implementation of the new Youth Justice Legislation and include details of charges and outcomes of juvenile court appearances.	Ongoing	Tasmanian Dept of Health and Human Services
	National Survey of Voluntary Work	Estimates of the number of people undertaking voluntary work, activities performed, time spent and field of voluntary work.	1995	ABS
	National Community Services Labour Force Data	Statistics and analysis of community services labour force from ABS and other sources.	1997	AIHW
Service Utilisation	National Survey of Time Use	Information on use of time, including time spent in voluntary work and other community participation. Data provide a measure of unpaid work in the community and particularly quantify the time spent in formal voluntary work and informal caring.	1997	ABS
	Juvenile Court System	Information is supplied from the Department of Juvenile Justice on all Children's Court appearances involving welfare matters.	Twice-yearly	NSW Department of Juvenile Justice
	Client-Carer Outcomes	—	—	—

APPENDIX G

National data collections and development activities conducted by government:

Family Support

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
Population Wellbeing	Census of Population	Information on characteristics of all members of the Australian population.	5-yearly	ABS
	National Family Characteristics Survey	Data on structure and characteristics of families, parents and children.	First survey April 1997	ABS
	Household and Labour Force Surveys	Data on structure and function of households and families.	Ongoing	ABS
Service Provision	Welfare Services Expenditure Data	Data from the ABS and the Commonwealth Grants Commission on government expenditure on welfare services analysed and published. Methods for estimating expenditure by the private sector will be further developed.	Ongoing	AIHW
	National Survey of Voluntary Work	Estimates of the number of people undertaking voluntary work, activities performed, time spent and field of voluntary work.	1995	ABS
	National Community Services Labour Force Data	Statistics and analysis of community services labour force from ABS and other sources.	1997	AIHW
	National Survey of Time Use	Information on use of time, including time spent in voluntary work and other community participation. Data provide a measure of unpaid work in the community and particularly quantify the time spent in formal voluntary work and informal caring.	1997	ABS
	FAMnet	Data collection being developed on Family Relationships Services Program.	To commence early 1999	FaCS
	NIS (National Information System)	Data collection by Community Legal Services.	Ongoing	FaCS
	Service Utilisation	FAMnet	Data collection being developed on Family Relationships Services Program.	To commence early 1999
NIS (National Information System)		Data collection by Community Legal Services.	Ongoing	FaCS
Client-Carer Outcomes	—	—	—	—

APPENDIX H

National data collections and development activities conducted by government:

Emergency Relief & Crisis Services

	Title	Description	Time	Agencies
Population Wellbeing	—	—	—	—
Service Provision	National Survey of Voluntary Work	Estimates of the number of people undertaking voluntary work, activities performed, time spent and field of voluntary work.	1995	ABS
	Welfare Services Expenditure Data	Data from the ABS and the Commonwealth Grants Commission on government expenditure on welfare services analysed and published. Methods for estimating expenditure by the private sector will be further developed.	Ongoing	AIHW
	Emergency Relief Information and Payments System	Program Administration System used to make payments to community-based welfare organisations funded under the Commonwealth Emergency Relief Program. Details recorded include name of agency, address, outlets, geographical location and level of grant.	Ongoing	FaCS
Service Utilisation	Emergency Relief Data Collection Program	Data collection across all emergency relief services to collect data on applicants for emergency relief services.	August 1995 - August 1998	DHFS
Client-Carer Outcomes	—	—	—	—

APPENDIX I

National data collections and development activities conducted by government:

Indigenous People

Title	Description	Time	Agencies
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey	Comprehensive survey of the social conditions of the health and welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	1994 and proposed 2000	ABS
Census of Population	Information on characteristics of all members of the Australian population, including Indigenous identification.	5-yearly	ABS
Child Protection	Administrative data from States and Territories on child protection cases. Includes Indigenous identification.	Ongoing	States and Territories AIHW

APPENDIX J

National data development activities conducted by government:

Data Development Infrastructure

Title	Description	Time	Agencies
National Community Services Data Dictionary	Develop NCSDD as the source of data definitions and classification for all areas of community services. Investigate integration of the National Health Data Dictionary with the NCSDD.	Ongoing from 1997	AIHW /NCSDC
National Community Services Information Model	Develop a national information model to assist in identifying the types of information needed to be reported on, and thus classified in a nationally consistent way. Investigate integration of the National Health Information Model with the NCSIM.	Ongoing from 1997	AIHW /NCSDC
National Community Services Information Development Plan	From extensive consultations, develop an information development plan. Publication of National Community Services Information Development Plan and Agreement. Investigate integration of the NCSIDP with the National Health Information Development Plan.	Ongoing from 1997	AIHW/ NCSIMG
National Classification of Community Services Activities, Users and Setting	Provide a framework for the future development of administrative data in the community services field. Investigate implementation in State/Territory administrative systems.	1997	AIHW
National Community Services Industry Survey	Provide baseline data on the size, structure, funding, expenditure and service delivery of the industry.	1996/97	ABS

Continued.

Title	Description	Time	Agencies
Analysis of the Commonwealth DHFS data standards	<p>Examine a subset of the DHFS data collections and holdings to identify ways in which the Department's data management can be improved to enable improvement of quality, timeliness and accuracy of the policy analysis and advising functions. The project will involve analysis of a sample of DHFS data sets to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the use of data dictionaries, models and standards, and compliance with the National Health DD and other relevant data standards and information models;</i> • <i>the benefits flowing from better compliance with data standards and models; and</i> • <i>a summary of findings and implications for departmental management information.</i> 	1997	DHFS
Classifications	<p>Revision of General Government purpose classification on health and welfare.</p>	Ongoing	ABS AIHW CGC
National Directory of Data Collections in Health, Welfare and Housing	<p>Inventory of all data collections in Health, Welfare and Housing by National, State and Territory governments.</p>	1996	AIHW
Metadata repository of FaCS holding and definitions	<p>On-line metadata facility to provide users with key information on what statistical outputs are generated, the definitions behind those outputs, and the files the fields from which the data items are compiled.</p>	Version 1 completed 1997	FaCS