

# **ACT Auditor-General's Office**

## **Performance Audit Report**

**Early Childhood Schooling**

**Report No. 3/2012**

**Education and Training Directorate**

**June 2012**



PA 11/03

The Speaker  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
Civic Square, London Circuit  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Speaker

I am pleased to forward to you a Performance Audit Report titled '**Early Childhood Schooling**' for tabling in the Legislative Assembly pursuant to Section 17(5) of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*.

Yours sincerely

Dr Maxine Cooper  
Auditor-General  
12 June 2012



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AEDI	Australian Early Development Index
AIU	Autism Intervention Unit
CFC	Child and Family Centre
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CSD	Community Services Directorate
EALD	English as an Additional Language or Dialect
ECC	Early Childhood Centre
ECU	Early Childhood Unit
EIP	Early Intervention Playgroup
EIU	Early Intervention Unit
ESL	English as a Second Language
ETD	Education and Training Directorate
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
LBOTE	Language Background Other Than English
LIU	Language Intervention Unit
MACH Nurse	Maternal and Child Health Nurse
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
PEA	Priority Enrolment Area
PIPS	Performance Indicators in Primary Schools
RoGS	Report on Government Services
SBM	School Based Management
SES	Socio-economic status
SLA	Service Level Agreement



# 1. REPORT SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The particular importance of early childhood education is well understood and documented. Effective early childhood education ‘supports the development of cognitive, social, emotional and motivational skills, but also drives later learning and achievement, which in turn contributes to the ‘human capital’ that underpins the economic well-being of the broader community’.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 This report provides an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on the results of a performance audit on the administrative effectiveness of the Education and Training Directorate’s (ETD) delivery of the following early childhood schooling programs and services:
- the Early Childhood Schools initiative;
  - Koori Preschool Programs;
  - Early Intervention Programs; and
  - Preschool Early Entry Programs.
- 1.3 The last three programs and services are explicitly designed to provide additional support and assistance to children from particular groups within the ACT community who may be at an educational disadvantage. The Early Childhood Schools were premised on the importance of improving early years’ learning and development for children, particularly children at risk.
- 1.4 The audit objective, criteria and method are outlined in Appendix A. The audit is focused on ETD’s school-based programs and services and does not include an examination of services provided by the Community Services Directorate (CSD) or Health Directorate to children (or their families). However, the audit does examine inter-agency communication and coordination arrangements, which contribute to the delivery of early childhood schooling services by ETD.
- 1.5 Nationally, there are a number of different initiatives underway, whereby the ACT Government and its agencies have various responsibilities and commitments. These include the *National Early Childhood Development Strategy*, the *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education*, the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care* and *Closing the Gap: the National Partnership*

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<sup>1</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers (2011). *A practical vision for early childhood education and care*, p.12.

*Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development.* The audit did not specifically examine ACT Government agencies' activities under these initiatives.

- 1.6 The audit is focused on the management of the programs and services, and as such does not examine curriculum or teaching issues.
- 1.7 This report uses the term childcare. This has been done knowing that 'early childhood education and care' is the term used in some agencies. For readability purposes, and in order to avoid confusion with other terms used in the report, the term childcare is used.

### **ETD's delivery of early childhood schooling**

- 1.8 ETD defines early childhood as birth to eight years. Early childhood schooling is defined as services delivered to children within this age group, including schooling up to and including Year 2.
- 1.9 ETD primarily delivers early childhood schooling through 62 public primary schools throughout the ACT (including Jervis Bay). Most of these schools cater for Preschool to Year Six enrolments, while a smaller number of schools cater for Preschool to Year 10 enrolments.
- 1.10 Four of ETD's 62 primary schools have been established as Early Childhood Schools. These are located in Narrabundah, Lyons, Scullin and Isabella Plains. The Early Childhood Schools were intended to focus on early childhood education and early intervention. The schools provide integrated services for children (and their families) from birth to eight, including childcare, family support services and other services that support children's learning, health and well-being. The existing Early Childhood Schools have been situated in localities in the ACT that are characterised by greater levels of disadvantage. A fifth Early Childhood School will open in Franklin in 2013.
- 1.11 ETD provides targeted early childhood services to particular groups of children who need additional support. These include the:
- Koori Preschool Programs – early childhood schooling programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged three to five years;
  - Early Intervention Programs – programs that provides additional services for eligible children aged two years to school entry, who have, or are at risk of having; delays in development, a disability, at risk from social or environmental factors, severe communication and social difficulties and/or multiple disabilities; and
  - Preschool Early Entry Programs – programs that allows children to gain early entry to a Preschool.

1.12 Table 1.1 provides a summary of these programs, including eligibility criteria, the services delivered, service locations and recent enrolment statistics.

**Table 1.1: ETD’s early childhood schooling services**

	Early Childhood Schools	Koori Preschool Programs	Early Intervention Programs	Preschool Early Entry Programs
<b>Services</b>	<p>The schools are designed to provide integrated services for children (birth to eight) and their families.</p> <p>Services include Preschool to Year 2 classes and childcare and may include family support, health services and other services that support children’s learning, health and well-being.</p> <p>The schools were expected to provide targeted services for children and families with specific needs, including early intervention services.</p>	<p>The programs are intended to supplement mainstream Preschool services.</p> <p>The programs focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills and children’s capacity to engage with school.</p>	<p>The programs provide services to eligible children, which focus on learning through play, participation, exploration and experimentation.</p> <p>Different services are offered under the auspice of the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Intervention Playgroups</li> <li>• Early Intervention Units</li> <li>• Language Intervention Units</li> <li>• Autism Intervention Units</li> </ul>	<p>The programs allow children to access a Preschool class in the year prior to attending Preschool. There are several programs aimed at children from groups with particular needs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gifted and talented</li> <li>• mobility (children from families who have moved to the ACT)</li> <li>• English as a Second Language</li> <li>• Hearing and Vision</li> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility criteria</b>	<p>No specific eligibility criteria.</p> <p>Does not have a catchment i.e. a Priority Enrolment Area, and therefore children from all areas can attend.</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged three to five years.</p> <p>Children under the age of three may attend if accompanied by a parent/carer.</p>	<p>Children aged two years to school entry who have, or at risk of having:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delays in development</li> <li>• a disability</li> <li>• at risk from social or environmental factors</li> <li>• severe communication and social difficulties</li> <li>• multiple disabilities</li> </ul>	<p>Eligibility criteria apply to each of the different services.</p>
<b>Locations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrabundah</li> <li>• Isabella Plains</li> <li>• Lyons</li> <li>• Scullin</li> <li>• Franklin (2013)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrabundah</li> <li>• Holt</li> <li>• Wanniasa</li> <li>• Richardson</li> <li>• Ngunnawal</li> </ul>	<p>Various locations throughout the ACT.</p>	<p>Offered at all Preschools throughout the ACT, subject to availability and capacity.</p>
<b>2011 enrolments</b>	<p>520 children in Preschool to Year Two across all schools.</p>	<p>70 children across the programs.</p>	<p>341 children across the programs.</p>	<p>115 enrolments across all programs.</p>

Source: Audit Office, based on Education and Training Directorate ACT School Census (February 2011)

## AUDIT CONCLUSION

1.13 The audit conclusion is set out below.

The delivery of early childhood schooling is a complex, yet vitally important role of the Education and Training Directorate (ETD). The substantial proportion of Preschool to Year 2 enrolments in ACT public schools (67.9 percent of total public and non-government school enrolments) shows the importance of public early childhood schooling to the ACT community.

While ACT children are, on the whole, performing well academically compared to their counterparts in other jurisdictions, there is evidence to indicate that children from particular groups within the community need additional support and development opportunities. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with a language background other than English, children with disabilities and developmental delays and children who are socially or economically disadvantaged. The early childhood schooling programs and services considered as part of this audit do provide additional support and development opportunities for many of these children. However, there is potential for their reach to be extended to other children in need.

Although ETD's early childhood schooling programs and services are delivering benefits to children and their families, there are shortcomings in ETD's planning, management and delivery of the programs and services. The purpose and objectives of the programs and services are unclear and children and families who need additional support are not targeted or given priority. This creates a risk that the programs and services do not achieve desired outcomes and that those most in need do not receive the additional support.

Specific findings are as follows:

### ***Early Childhood Schools***

The four Early Childhood Schools were established in 2009 to focus on early childhood education and early intervention. The schools are premised on the idea that children (and their families), particularly those who are vulnerable, will benefit from attending a single establishment that offers integrated early childhood services from birth to eight including health, community and childcare services, as well as schooling from Preschool to Year 2.

While Early Childhood Schools provide programs and services for all children, it was expected that they would provide support for ACT children (and families) who are socially or economically disadvantaged. The schools' integrated service delivery model would likely offer significant benefits for these children. However, ETD has not specifically identified and targeted children who are socially or economically disadvantaged for potential enrolment and is unable to identify how many children at the schools represent this group. Without a strategy of planning for, and engaging with, socially or economically disadvantaged families, there is a risk that the schools become 'schools of

choice' for ACT families, who recognise the benefits of the model and the suite of services that are delivered. In advancing such a strategy, however, it will be important for the schools to continue to accommodate children from diverse backgrounds.

The Early Childhood Schools are comparatively more expensive, compared to other ACT public primary schools. The smaller size of the Early Childhood Schools, unlike larger ACT public primary schools (e.g. Preschool to Year 6 schools), means that economies of scale and efficiencies in administrative and operational costs are not achieved. In 2012 the notional recurrent income per student at the schools is expected to range between \$12 806 and \$18 722 across the four schools. This is higher than nearby larger ACT public primary schools, where the figure on a total school population basis is expected to range between \$9 520 and \$11 644 per student. As the Early Childhood Schools cost comparatively more than nearby P-6 schools, it is important that the schools' services and programs are actively promoted, particularly to those most in need.

Service delivery costs incurred by the Community Services Directorate and the Health Directorate, which are not recognised in the schools' budgeting, also add to the overall cost of the initiative.

#### ***Koori Preschool Programs***

The five Koori Preschool Programs are providing an important service for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Parents/carers of children attending the programs provided positive feedback on the benefits of the programs for their children and the broader community. However, generating enrolments in the programs is an issue and there is evidence to indicate that a disproportionately low number of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are enrolled in the programs.

There is only one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff member across all of the programs. A concerted effort needs to be made to engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to encourage interest and enrolments in the programs.

#### ***Early Intervention Programs***

The Early Intervention Programs provide valuable support to many students and their families. Parents/carers of children attending the programs provided positive feedback on the benefits of the program for their children.

In recent years, the programs have been characterised by declining attendance and the closure of a number of services. ETD's practice is to locate the programs in schools where there is available physical space, and not necessarily where there is a need for the services. This means that there are no services in some parts of Canberra and there is only one service in the growing suburbs of Gungahlin.

## KEY FINDINGS

1.14 The audit conclusions are supported by the following findings:

### Early childhood schooling governance and context (Chapter 2)

- The ACT Government's administrative arrangements for early childhood education contrasts with most other jurisdictions where responsibility for early childhood education in a childcare and schooling context lies with a single department or directorate. In the ACT, CSD is responsible for licensing, regulating and monitoring early childhood education in a childcare context, while ETD is responsible for the delivery of early childhood education in a public schooling context. There is merit in combining administrative responsibility for early childhood education in a single directorate, in order to promote more effective responsibility and accountability for overall early childhood outcomes.
- Children with a language background other than English (LBOTE) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a greater proportional representation in ACT Government Preschools, compared to their representation in the broader community. This provides support for the delivery of Preschool support services that specifically cater to these groups.
- Information maintained by ETD shows that children from groups with additional needs, including LBOTE children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from low socio-economic groups have lower educational achievements in key tests conducted in Kindergarten (Performance Indicators in Primary Schools) and Year 3 (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy). These test results provide support for the need to provide additional early childhood schooling support and development services to these groups.

### Planning for the community's needs (Chapter 3)

- While a number of ETD branches and sections have a role with respect to planning for service delivery, there is no clear identification of who is responsible and accountable for identifying, mapping and quantifying target group needs for particular programs and services.
- The *ACT Public Schools Enrolment Projections* document is a key document prepared by ETD to assist in its planning for program and service delivery. The document does not cover enrolment projections for some programs and services, including the Early Intervention Programs and Preschool Early Entry Programs.
- Within the Enrolment Projections document, planning for Koori Preschools and Special Schools/Special Classes in Mainstream Schools is done on the basis of 'existing demand and current planned enrolments'. There is no

evidence of a rigorous needs analysis to identify and quantify particular target groups and their needs.

- Children from socially or economically disadvantaged families are an important group for the receipt of services from ETD. These children are not separately recognised and identified for planning purposes by ETD.
- Children from socially or economically disadvantaged families may come to the attention of other ACT Government agencies, including CSD and the Health Directorate. There are no formal inter-agency referral processes in place whereby relevant agencies identify and communicate with ETD regarding these children, to assist ETD with its planning for service delivery.

#### **Managing service delivery (Chapter 4)**

- The current administrative arrangements within ETD leads to shared policy and administrative responsibility for the delivery of early childhood schooling services to key groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, LBOTE students and students with additional needs, between two ETD branches. Shared responsibility during the critical early childhood schooling period impairs ETD's ability to have continuity and consistency in communication and engagement with families from these groups.
- Aspects of the administration of ETD early childhood schooling programs and services considered as part of this audit, including the Early Childhood Schools, Koori Preschool Programs, Early Intervention Programs and Preschool Early Entry Programs have been devolved to the schools as part of the broader school-based management process. The devolution of administrative responsibility to the schools presents both risks and opportunities to effective service delivery. The current lack of clarity associated with administrative responsibilities and accountabilities heightens risks associated with the effective delivery of these programs and services.
- Early childhood schooling programs and services considered as part of this audit have poorly described objectives. This creates ambiguity and has also impaired the ability of ETD to demonstrate the effectiveness of its programs and services.
- Despite the Early Childhood Schools being established in parts of Canberra where there was a perceived need for the delivery of services to socially or economically disadvantaged children and their families, ETD is not specifically identifying and targeting children from socially or economically disadvantaged families for enrolment at these schools. This leads to a risk that the benefits of the schools, primarily associated with the integrated service delivery model that creates seamless access to services for children and their families, are not made use of by the children and families who would likely significantly benefit.

- There is a lack of business and operational planning associated with the early childhood schooling programs and services. Current branch business plans are activity and input focused and do not clearly articulate details associated with the management and implementation of the programs and services.
- There is a lack of risk management associated with the programs, including risk assessments and risk management plans for each of the programs and services.
- Key performance indicators have not been developed for the early childhood schooling programs and services. Some performance measures have been identified and articulated in branch business plans, but these are activity-based and input focused. They do not facilitate a full assessment of the effectiveness or otherwise of the programs and services.
- Administrative and procedural guidance associated with the early childhood schooling programs and services varies considerably. Some programs and services do not have administrative and procedural guidance, while guidance for other programs and services is inconsistent in form and content.
- Program and service delivery is not evaluated on a regular basis. As a result, ETD cannot provide assurance that its programs and services are effective, meeting intended policy outcomes or offering value for money.

### Meeting the community's needs (Chapter 5)

- A benefit of the Early Childhood Schools is said to be the 'birth to eight' model of service delivery and that children will benefit from attending a single establishment that offers an integrated early childhood schooling experience. In pursuing this model, childcare fees payable to the private operator of childcare services in the Early Childhood Schools presents a potential barrier to socially or economically disadvantaged children and their families.
- The Early Childhood Schools are not subject to the ETD's Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) policy and therefore there is no barrier to them assisting children from socially or economically disadvantaged families who may not be in the immediate vicinity.
- Children attending the childcare component of the school are not guaranteed a place in the school from Preschool to Year 2. This impairs the delivery of the 'birth to eight' model of service delivery which is one of the key reasons for establishing the schools.
- The lack of dedicated health facilities in the Lyons and Isabella Plains Early Childhood Schools, as well as the future Franklin Early Childhood School,

impairs the achievement of the schools' objective to integrate health services within its education, family and community services.

- Governance and administrative arrangements in the Early Childhood Schools have presented difficulties to effective management and communication. This has primarily derived from the involvement of the private childcare operator in each of the schools. Early Childhood School principals are responsible for the management of the school as a whole, but have found it difficult to instruct local childcare staff, who necessarily have responsibilities to their employer. Revised governance arrangements have been incorporated in most recent contractual arrangements, which ETD expects to address this particular issue.
- The Koori Preschool Programs are being accessed by a small proportion of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the ACT. This may be due to a range of reasons, including parents/carers' choices and preferences. However, there is an opportunity to improve the promotion and targeting of the programs by improving the targeting and marketing of the program to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working in the programs and developing better linkages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations.
- There is conflicting information as to whether the Early Intervention Programs are meeting the needs of the ACT community. Enrolments in the programs have been declining and there is evidence to suggest that the programs have excess capacity, which may warrant the closure of some services. Alternatively, there is strong evidence to suggest that the programs are inaccessible to some parents/carers and that there is an unmet need in the community for the programs. Barriers to accessing the programs are presented by the current location of the services, which has led to a lack of services in significant areas of the ACT (including Gungahlin, the inner north and inner south). The lack of transport options for parents/carers was raised as a barrier to accessing these services.
- The uneven placement of the Early Intervention Programs throughout the ACT is primarily because the programs are only delivered from schools where there is physical capacity. Mainstream Preschool and schooling classes take priority over the Early Intervention Programs. This has led to Early Intervention Program services being regularly shifted around schools to accommodate the needs of mainstream schooling classes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

- 1.15 The audit made 11 recommendations to address the audit findings detailed in this report. Priority should be given to the implementation of Recommendations **1, 3, 4, 5 and 7a**.

- 1.16 In accordance with section 18 of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*, a final draft of this report was provided to the Directors-General of the Education and Training, Community Services and Health Directorates for consideration and comments.
- 1.17 The Director-General of the Education and Training Directorate provided a general response to the report and individual responses for each recommendation. The Director-General of the Community Services Directorate provided responses to those recommendations that were relevant to its operations. Health Directorate's Director-General responded that "...it has no issue with the publication of the final report."

### **Education and Training Directorate Response:**

The Education and Training Directorate welcomes the Auditor-General's performance audit of Early Childhood Schooling. Over the last decade there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of the early years of life. Research across the medical, behavioural and social sciences provides the evidence that the early years are critical in setting the foundation for learning, behaviour and health throughout the school years and on into adult life.

The Directorate is committed to ensuring that all children in the ACT have the right to enjoy and experience a full and supported childhood. A critical component of this experience is early childhood education. Children have the best start when their early childhood learning experiences are guided by professionals with expertise in early childhood development. High quality education programs boost cognitive development, social and emotional skills and generally prepare children for continued success at school.

The Directorate is implementing the COAG national agenda for early childhood education. From 2013, all public school preschool units will be delivering 15 hours of preschool education. In addition, together with the Community Services Directorate, the Directorate has been implementing of the National Quality Standard that is required under the *Education and Care Services National Law*. For the first time ACT public school preschool units come under the National Law and will undergo assessment and rating in line with other education and care services across Australia.

The Directorate delivers quality education and specialist programs to nearly 14 000 children in the early childhood education sector. Delivery occurs in a number of early childhood programs and specialist structures within the public schooling system. The vast majority of students are catered for through the provision of mainstream preschools, kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 quality education programs within public schools at 74 sites across the ACT.

The Directorate's four Early Childhood Schools operate a childcare component birth to 4 years and a primary school component preschool to year 2. They function as centres of learning and development for children (birth to eight) and their families. Early childhood schools focus on quality learning, student well-being and family participation. They establish the foundation for a child's future health, learning and social well-being; provide support to children and families in the early years; improve the transitions for children

and families between home, early childhood settings and the early school years; help build strong families and communities and support vulnerable children and their families.

The Directorate also provides a range of targeted settings and programs to meet the needs of specific student cohorts:

- Koori preschool programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from birth to five years of age
- Early Childhood Intervention playgroups for children from two years of age with delays or disabilities
- Early Childhood Intervention units for children from three years of age with delays or disabilities
- Early Entry programs for children who have English as an additional language or dialect, children who are hearing or vision impaired, children who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and children who are from mobile families returning to jurisdictions with different school starting ages
- Accelerated entry for children who have been identified as gifted and talented.

The Report highlights the positive overall academic performance of ACT children and that the Directorate's early childhood schooling programs and services are delivering benefits to children and their families. It further highlights the complex vital role of early childhood schooling in education. The Auditor-General's report specifically covers early childhood schools and targeted early childhood programs which cater for approximately 7% of the overall total number of students enrolled in early childhood programs.

The Directorate welcomes the opportunity to continue to improve outcomes for all children in the ACT.

1.18 In addition, the Directors-General provided responses to each recommendation, as shown below.

**Recommendation 1 (Chapter 2)**

**ACT Government administrative arrangements**

The ACT Government should:

- a) consider combining administrative responsibility for the delivery of all early childhood education responsibilities (in a childcare and schooling context) within ETD; and
- b) develop key performance indicators for early childhood education, which covers service delivery in a childcare and schooling context. These could include AEDI measures, enrolment indicators and early childhood educational outcomes, as measured by PIPS and NAPLAN Year 3 results, particularly for students from groups with additional needs.

**Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed

Investigations will be undertaken through whole of Government processes in consultation with CMCD and CSD to consider combining administrative responsibility for the delivery of all early childhood education responsibilities (in a childcare and schooling context) within ETD. Key Performance Indicators can be reported against and are being further developed through the activity associated with the COAG early childhood agenda, in which the ACT is a participant. The Directorate, CSD and ACT Health are all involved in improved data collection and reporting for these National Partnerships.

**Community Services Directorate Response:**

The Community Services Directorate notes this recommendation.

**Recommendation 2 (Chapter 3)**

**ETD's planning for early childhood schooling programs and services**

ETD should enhance its planning for its early childhood schooling programs and services by:

- a) incorporating planning for the Early Intervention Programs and the Preschool Early Entry Programs within the *ACT Public Schools Enrolment Projections* document;
- b) ensuring all planning for program and service delivery is underpinned by a rigorous needs analysis identifying and quantifying particular target groups and their needs; and
- c) developing formal arrangements with the Community Services Directorate and Health Directorate for the identification and referral of children from socially or economically disadvantaged families to ETD.

**Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed

The Directorate has already incorporated planning for targeted programs within the *ACT Public Schools Enrolment Projections* document. The Directorate will undertake increased analysis of how the provision of targeted programs across the system best meets the needs of targeted groups. The Directorate will continue to develop arrangements with other ACT Government agencies to ensure that appropriate arrangements are developed.

**Recommendation 3 (Chapter 4)**

**ETD's roles and responsibilities for service delivery**

ETD should ensure all roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for the delivery of early childhood schooling programs and services are more clearly articulated and documented in ETD governance and program documents.

**Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed

The Directorate is reviewing its documentation to more clearly articulate roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for early childhood schooling programs and services within the context of school based management and Empowering ACT Schools.

#### **Recommendation 4 (Chapter 4)**

##### **Program objectives**

ETD should ensure that all early childhood schooling programs and services have clearly articulated and documented purposes and objectives. ETD should specifically ensure that:

- a) the purpose and objectives sought from the Koori Preschool Programs are clearly identified and documented; and
- b) the purpose of the Early Childhood Schools is clearly articulated and documented, particularly with respect to delivering services to socially or economically disadvantaged.

##### **Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed

The Directorate is reviewing its documentation to more clearly articulate purposes and objectives for targeted programs such as the Koori preschool programs and the Early Childhood Schools, including the delivery of services to socially or economically disadvantaged children (and their families) within the context of school based management and Empowering ACT Schools.

#### **Recommendation 5 (Chapter 4)**

##### **Program management**

ETD should ensure that all early childhood schooling programs and services have:

- a) business and operational plans to inform program management and administration. Business and operational plans should articulate the means and mechanisms by which programs and services are to be implemented;
- b) program risk management practices, including risk assessments and risk management plans;
- c) key performance indicators. The key performance indicators should be sufficiently precise to inform management and administration and facilitate ongoing assessment and reporting on the achievement of program objectives; and
- d) administrative and procedural guidance for staff.

##### **Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed

The Directorate will undertake further work to refine how relevant plans inform targeted program management and administration within the context of school based management and Empowering ACT Schools. The Directorate will ensure that overall risk assessment and management plans are developed to improve targeted program planning and outcomes, and are integrated into the host school's risk framework.

The provision of consistent and comprehensive data in the early years on which key performance indicators can be reported against is being addressed through the COAG early childhood agenda, in which ACT is an active participant. The Directorate, CSD and ACT Health are involved in improved data collection and reporting for these National Partnerships. Current administrative and procedural guidance documents will be reviewed and updated for targeted early childhood schooling programs within the context of school based management.

#### **Recommendation 6 (Chapter 4)**

##### **Program evaluations**

ETD should conduct regular evaluations of its early childhood schooling programs and services. The evaluations should seek to examine the extent to which the programs and services are meeting intended objectives and whether they are a cost-effective means of delivering services to the ACT community. As a priority, ETD should evaluate:

- a) the Early Childhood Schools initiative; and
- b) the Koori Preschool Programs.

#### **Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed

The Early Childhood Schools initiative will be evaluated in 2014 after five years of operation. The Early Childhood Schools Evaluation Framework has already been developed. The Koori Preschool program was part of the Early Childhood Intervention Program review in 2011. The next review is due in 2013/14.

**Recommendation 7 (Chapter 5)**

**Service delivery within the Early Childhood Schools**

ETD should:

- a) review the model of fee subsidy used to support socially or economically disadvantaged families access to the Early Childhood Schools; and
- b) review the provision of health services in the Early Childhood Schools, including the extent to which the lack of dedicated health facilities represents a barrier to effective service provision.

ETD should develop a policy response to address their findings.

**Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed in part

Any change to fee subsidy is the purview of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Government is responsible for and subsidises long day care childcare fees across the ACT, not just in the Early Childhood Schools. The ACT will continue to provide advice to the Commonwealth on the impact of childcare fees on families in the ACT.

In relation to the Early Childhood Schools the Directorate will review the current model of ACT fee subsidy used to support socially or economically disadvantaged families when accessing the Early Childhood Schools. The provision of Health services within the Early Childhood Schools will be further considered as part of the planned Early Childhood Schools review noted above and in consultation with the ACT Health Directorate.

**Recommendation 8 (Chapter 5)**

**Early Childhood Schools' delivery of birth to eight 'wraparound' services**

ETD should develop administrative and procedural guidance for its Early Childhood Schools to ensure that the birth to eight 'wraparound' services model is realised for socially or economically disadvantaged families and children. Specifically an enrolments policy should be developed which:

- a) recognises the need to deliver services to socially or economically disadvantaged families and children; and
- b) addresses the issue of transition of children from childcare to Preschool to Year 2 years.

**Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed

The provision of access to the Early Childhood Schools is a priority for the Directorate. Universal provision of services is supported by a range of targeted programs. The need to deliver services to socially or economically disadvantaged families and children is one of the considerations in determining enrolment priority in early childhood schools.

The Directorate will further refine the enrolment policy for the Early Childhood Schools and also work with the respective child care providers to ensure that wherever possible, children will be able to remain at the Early Childhood Schools from childcare onwards.

**Community Services Directorate Response:**

The Community Services Directorate supports the Auditor-General's recommendation and looks forward to working with the Education and Training Directorate to deliver on this recommendation.

## **Recommendation 9 (Chapter 5)**

### **Koori Preschool Programs**

ETD should identify opportunities to extend the reach of the Koori Preschool Programs to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. In doing so, ETD should seek to:

- a) develop better linkages with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, government agencies and community organisations, in order to generate referrals and enrolments in the programs; and
- b) engage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to work in the programs.

### **Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed

The Directorate will seek to further improve relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community with the view to increase participation across the broader ACT public education provision. The Directorate is currently developing an Employee Action Plan as part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan.

### **Community Services Directorate Response:**

The Community Services Directorate supports the Auditor-General's recommendation and looks forward to working with the Education and Training Directorate to deliver on this recommendation.

## **Recommendation 10 (Chapter 5)**

### **Early Intervention Programs**

Following the implementation of Recommendation 2, which addresses ETD's planning processes for its early childhood schooling programs and services, ETD should:

- a) review the current policy and management arrangements for the placement of its Early Intervention Program services and ensure that where possible Early Intervention Program services are placed in areas where there is a clearly identified and quantified need; and
- b) review the feasibility of providing transport services to families of children who need to attend the programs and use the services.

### **Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed

ETD will review the current arrangement for the placement of Early Intervention Program services and the feasibility of transport support to families. It should be noted that, owing to the increase in preschool enrolments, vacant space in the early years is at a premium in the public system in the ACT. It should also be noted that, where required, families and children can already access transport to support their attendance at early intervention programs. There may be significant funding implications for new facilities in identified high demand locations where vacant space does not exist, and for new transport arrangements, which would need to be considered.

**Recommendation 11 (Chapter 5)**

**Preschool Early Entry Programs**

ETD should ensure that accurate data on the number of applications and enrolments for the Preschool Early Entry Programs is maintained, monitored and reported against, to assist with program management and service delivery.

**Education and Training Directorate Response:**

Agreed

The Directorate has finalised work on data collection systems to ensure data can be reported to meet the requirements of the recommendation.



## 2. EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOLING GOVERNANCE AND CONTEXT

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- 2.1 This chapter provides background information and the context for ETD's delivery of early childhood schooling, including particular programs and services that are aimed at providing additional support for children.

### SUMMARY

#### Conclusion

ACT children are, on the whole, performing well academically compared to their counterparts in other jurisdictions, although there is evidence to indicate that children from specific groups are lagging behind their ACT peers in some areas. These include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with a language background other than English (LBOTE) and children who are socially or economically disadvantaged.

#### Key findings

- The ACT Government's administrative arrangements for early childhood education contrasts with most other jurisdictions where responsibility for early childhood education in a childcare and schooling context lies with a single department or directorate. In the ACT, CSD is responsible for licensing, regulating and monitoring early childhood education in a childcare context, while ETD is responsible for the delivery of early childhood education in a public schooling context. There is merit in combining administrative responsibility for early childhood education in a single directorate, in order to promote more effective responsibility and accountability for overall early childhood outcomes.
- Children with a language background other than English (LBOTE) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a greater proportional representation in ACT Government Preschools, compared to their representation in the broader community. This provides support for the delivery of Preschool support services that specifically cater to these groups.
- Information maintained by ETD shows that children from groups with additional needs, including LBOTE children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from low socio-economic groups have lower educational achievements in key tests conducted in Kindergarten (Performance Indicators in Primary Schools) and Year 3 (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy). These test results provide support for the need to provide additional early childhood schooling support and development services to these groups.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOLING

2.2 The importance of early childhood schooling to a child's development is well understood and documented. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) notes that there is 'clear evidence from Australia and overseas that the early years of a child's life have a profound impact on their future health, development, learning and wellbeing.'<sup>2</sup>

2.3 A 2009 report prepared on behalf of ETD also noted:

Primary schooling is a critical stage for developing children's competence in literacy and numeracy as a foundation for secondary school study and workforce participation. For individual students, a low level of achievement in literacy and numeracy is disempowering and prevents them, as adults, from participating fully in society. It is associated with a lack of engagement in school, lower levels of retention to Year 12, lower tertiary entrance scores and high rates of unemployment.<sup>3</sup>

### Need for targeted programs and services

2.4 Some children are at a comparative disadvantage to their peers and may require additional services and support. A 2009 report prepared on behalf of ETD noted a strong correlation between students' educational achievements and the following factors:

- the level of education and occupation of a child's parents (i.e. their socio-economic status (SES));
- the social composition of a school's population (i.e. the extent to which the schools' students are from a low-SES or high SES-background); and
- factors such as gender, language background and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.<sup>4</sup>

2.5 Based on longitudinal studies conducted within the ACT, the report identified that:

- students in the top SES quartile generally perform better, and students in the lowest SES quartile generally perform worse, than the 50 percent of students

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<sup>2</sup> Council of Australian Governments (2009) *Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy*, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> Sartbayeva, A., Daly, A. and Watson, L. (2009) *Influences on student performance in primary school in the ACT*. Paper prepared for the Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce's 2009 National measurement Roundtable, Hobart 3-4 December, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Sartbayeva, A., Daly, A. and Watson, L. (2009) *Influences on student performance in primary school in the ACT*. Paper prepared for the Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce's 2009 National measurement Roundtable, Hobart 3-4 December, p.2.

in the middle of the SES distribution in an early childhood schooling context. By Year 5, however, average school SES is no longer significant;

- students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) generally have lower educational achievements in Kindergarten compared to mainstream students. However, these students tend to make significant progress so that by Year 5 their performance is equal to or better than that of the mainstream student population; and
- similar to LBOTE students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students generally have lower educational achievements in Kindergarten compared to mainstream students. However, these students do not make similar gains in progress and by Year 5 remain significantly behind the mainstream student population.<sup>5</sup>

2.6 The results of this study suggest there is a need to provide additional early childhood schooling support and developmental services for particular groups within the ACT community. This includes children from low SES groups, LBOTE children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

2.7 However, it should also be recognised that there is a range of complex, inter-related factors that may contribute to poor student outcomes, which are generally beyond the influence of ETD. The Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs noted:

Factors such as housing status, family income and employment status, the health of the student and other family members, cultural background, access to educational resources such as books, information and communications technology and access to appropriate study space can all have a major influence on educational engagement and outcomes. These sorts of socio-economic factors require a whole of government approach.<sup>6</sup>

## **ACT GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES**

2.8 Within the ACT, both ETD and CSD have administrative responsibility for the delivery of early childhood education services. Administrative responsibility generally depends on whether the early childhood education is delivered in a childcare or schooling context.

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<sup>5</sup> Sartbayeva, A., Daly, A. and Watson, L. (2009) *Influences on student performance in primary school in the ACT*. Paper prepared for the Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce's 2009 National measurement Roundtable, Hobart 3-4 December, p.13.

<sup>6</sup> Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs (2010) *Inquiry into the Educational Achievement Gap in the ACT*, p.4.

### **Community Services Directorate**

2.9 CSD is broadly responsible for the regulation of early childhood education in a childcare context. In addition to a range of programs and services directed towards children from birth to age five and their families, CSD is responsible for licensing, regulating and monitoring early childhood education and care services prior to Kindergarten (including Long Day Care, Family Day Care, After School Care, independent Preschools and playschools).

### **Education and Training Directorate**

2.10 ETD is broadly responsible for the delivery of early childhood education in a schooling context. This includes:

- delivery of free early childhood education and care through ACT public Preschool units for children in the year before Kindergarten;
- delivery of education services through government schools from Kindergarten; and
- registering non-government schools from Kindergarten.

### **Other jurisdictions' administrative arrangements**

2.11 In March 2011, in relation to Australia's overall early childhood care and education policy and service delivery context, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) noted:

...systems for early childhood services – particularly for [early childhood education and care] services – continue to reflect the models and policy decisions of the past more than the needs of the present and future. The service system remains divided between a work-related childcare system and an education-focused Preschool system. This fragmentation and disconnectedness mean that there is no effective, coherent platform for the delivery of high quality, accessible and affordable services.<sup>7</sup>

2.12 The PWC report noted the introduction of the COAG National Early Childhood Development Strategy in 2009 and the introduction of national quality standards, which are to apply equally to childcare and Preschool services, as a means by which traditional barriers were being challenged.

2.13 Currently, the ACT's administrative arrangements contrast with those in most other Australian jurisdictions where administrative responsibility for early childhood care and education functions has been consolidated into a single department or directorate. In those jurisdictions, administrative responsibility for licensing, regulating, monitoring (and delivering) early childhood education in

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<sup>7</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers (2011). *A practical vision for early childhood education and care*, p.10.

a childcare and schooling context resides with a single department or directorate.

- 2.14 Jurisdictions with a single department or directorate include Victoria (the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), New South Wales (the Department of Education and Communities), Queensland (the Department of Education and Training) and South Australia (the Department of Early Childhood and Education, Tasmania (Department of Education) and Northern Territory (Department of Education and Training). Within these jurisdictions, early childhood education in a childcare context has been viewed as part of the continuum of education.
- 2.15 Audit suggests that such arrangements are likely to facilitate more effective accountability for achieving early childhood education outcomes. Current administrative arrangements between CSD and ETD mean that, while CSD is broadly responsible for childcare outcomes and ETD is broadly responsible for schooling outcomes, neither directorate is responsible for early childhood outcomes in their totality. Accordingly, the current segregation of administrative responsibility between ETD and CSD does not facilitate a process whereby a single directorate can take responsibility, and be held accountable, for early childhood education outcomes in the ACT. This risk is, however, mitigated by a National Quality Framework Governance Committee, which is made up of executives of both ETD and CSD. The Committee has been operational since June 2011 and is intended to deal with key strategic and operational issues related to the implementation of the National Quality Framework.
- 2.16 Nevertheless, consolidating administrative responsibility within a single directorate would facilitate the development and implementation of appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) for early childhood education. At present, given the shared responsibility between CSD and ETD, there are no early childhood education-specific KPIs within the ACT, which facilitate an assessment of the outcomes and achievements for the whole community.
- 2.17 Potential KPIs for early childhood education could be based on:
- enrolment rates;
  - children's educational outcomes, e.g. as measured by Performance Indicators in Preschools (PIPS) or National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), including educational outcomes achieved by identified groups with additional needs;
  - children's developmental progress, e.g. Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) measures; and
  - the ACT Government's commitment to the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care.

- 2.18 As noted previously, early childhood years (up to age eight) are critical as a foundation for future school study and workforce participation. Allocating responsibility and accountability for all early childhood education services within a single directorate and developing appropriate KPIs, would facilitate monitoring and reporting on children’s progress from birth to eight, the critical time for services to be delivered to enhance a child’s future educational outcomes.

### **Recommendation 1 (Chapter 2)**

The ACT Government should:

- a) consider combining administrative responsibility for the delivery of all early childhood education responsibilities (in a childcare and schooling context) within ETD; and
- b) develop key performance indicators for early childhood education, which covers service delivery in a childcare and schooling context. These could include AEDI measures, enrolment indicators and early childhood educational outcomes, as measured by PIPS and NAPLAN Year 3 results, particularly for students from groups with additional needs.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOLING ENROLMENT DATA**

- 2.19 Within the ACT education system, ETD defines early childhood as birth to eight years. ETD’s *Every chance to learn: Curriculum framework for ACT schools* (applicable to both public and non-government schools) defines early childhood education as Preschool to Year 2.

2.20 Within the ACT, school entry levels include:

- Preschool – child must be four years old, on or before 30 April of each school year; and
- Kindergarten – child must be five years old, on or before 30 April of each school year.

- 2.21 The minimum compulsory school age within the ACT is six years. A child must be enrolled at school no later than 14 days after the child turns six years old.

### **School enrolment data**

2.22 In February 2011, ACT children were enrolled to attend primary school at:

- 62 public Preschools/primary schools, including four Early Childhood Schools; and
- 38 non-government schools.

2.23 Table 2.1 presents information on primary school enrolments in early childhood schooling school levels and includes a breakdown of enrolments between public and non-government schools, as at February 2011.

**Table 2.1: Preschool to Year 2 enrolments in the ACT (2011)**

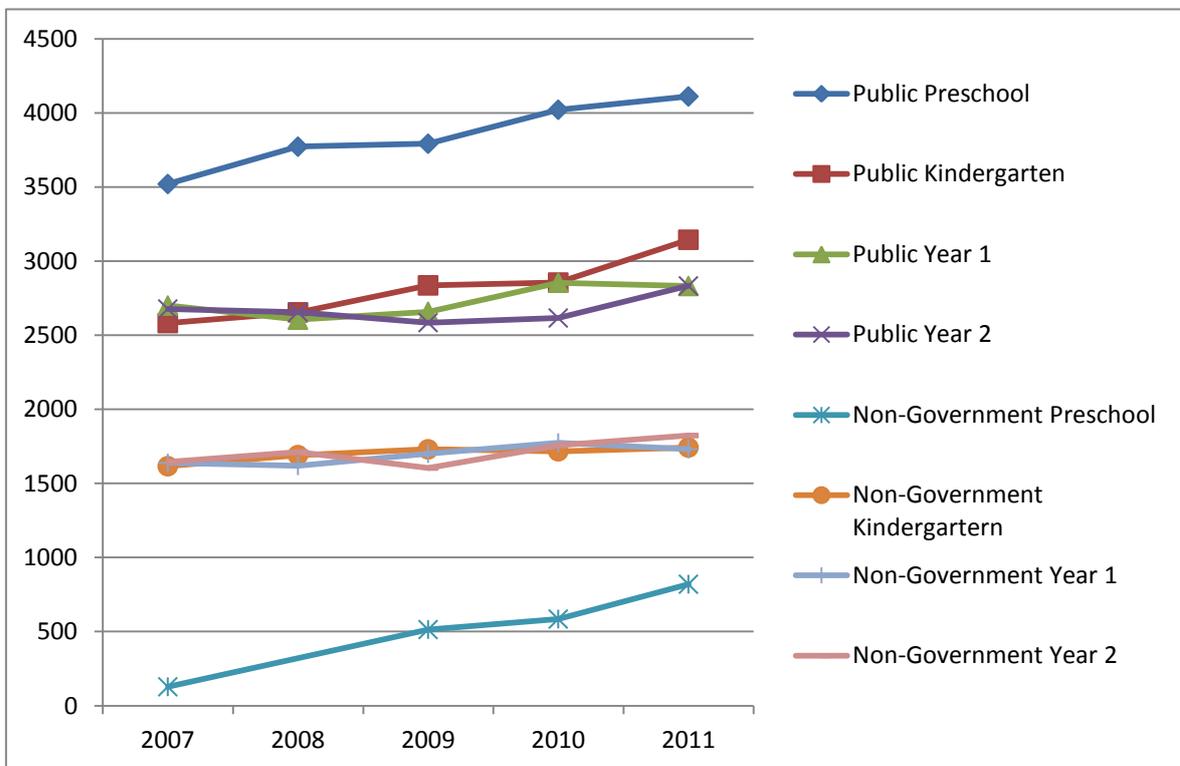
	Public primary school enrolments		Non-government primary school enrolments		Total
Preschool	4 111	83.4%	820	16.6%	4 931
Kindergarten	3 144	64.3%	1 742	35.7%	4 886
Year 1	2 832	62.1%	1 732	37.9%	4 564
Year 2	2 833	60.8%	1 823	39.2%	4 656

Source: Audit Office, based on Education and Training Directorate ACT School Census (February 2011)

2.24 Table 2.1 shows that there is a higher proportion of Preschool to Year 2 enrolments in ACT public schools compared to non-government schools. Enrolments in ACT public Preschools significantly outweigh enrolments in non-government Preschools. This shows the importance of public early childhood schooling to the ACT community.

2.25 Figure 2.1 shows five-year trends in Preschool to Year 2 enrolments in the ACT.

**Figure 2.1: Preschool to Year 2 enrolments in ACT public schools and non-government schools 2007 to 2011**



Source: Audit Office, based on Education and Training Directorate ACT School Census (February 2007 to February 2011)

2.26 Figure 2.1 shows that:

- Preschool and Kindergarten enrolments in ACT public schools have increased every year since 2007;
- total Year 1 and Year 2 enrolments in ACT public schools have increased since 2007 (but have also experienced declines in some years);
- Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 enrolments in non-government schools have increased slightly since 2007; and
- Preschool enrolments in non-government schools have increased significantly since 2007. (Note, however, 2008 data on Preschool enrolments in non-government schools was not collected).

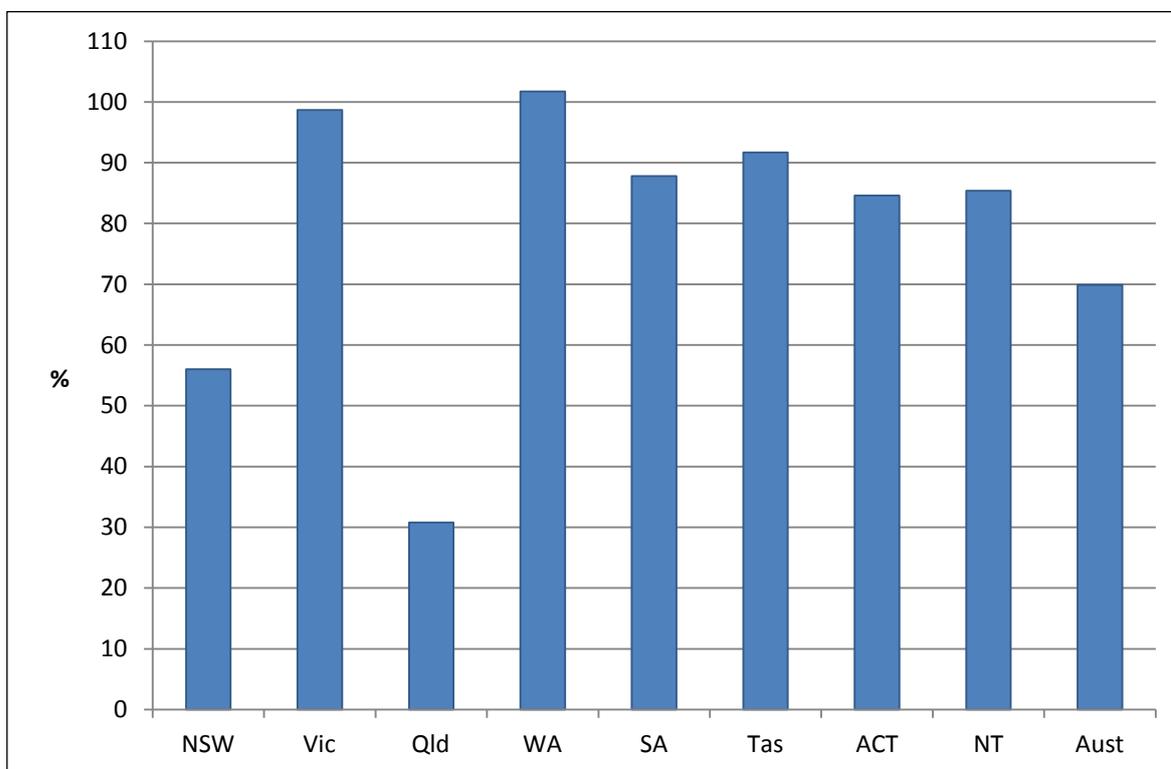
### Preschool enrolments

2.27 The annual Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services (RoGS)* presents data from all Australian jurisdictions on various aspects of government administration.

2.28 Preschool enrolment data is collected and reported as an 'indicator of governments' objective to ensure that all Australian families have equitable access to Preschool services'. The Productivity Commission notes that the numbers can be difficult to interpret based on the varied Preschool starting age across jurisdictions and over-estimation of enrolments in some states and territories (primarily due to interstate movements during the year or children attending multiple service providers). Nevertheless, Audit considers that the data may be useful to provide an overall picture of the states and territories, although some caution should be exercised in drawing any conclusions.

2.29 Figure 2.2 shows the percentage of enrolments in state and territory government funded and/or provided Preschools in the year prior to full-time school. For the purpose of the RoGS report, Preschool 'comprises services that deliver early childhood education programs...that are aimed at children in the year before they commence full time schooling (that is, when a child is 4 years old)'.

**Figure 2.2: Percentage of children enrolled in State and Territory Government funded and/or provided Preschools in the year prior to full-time school (2010-11)**

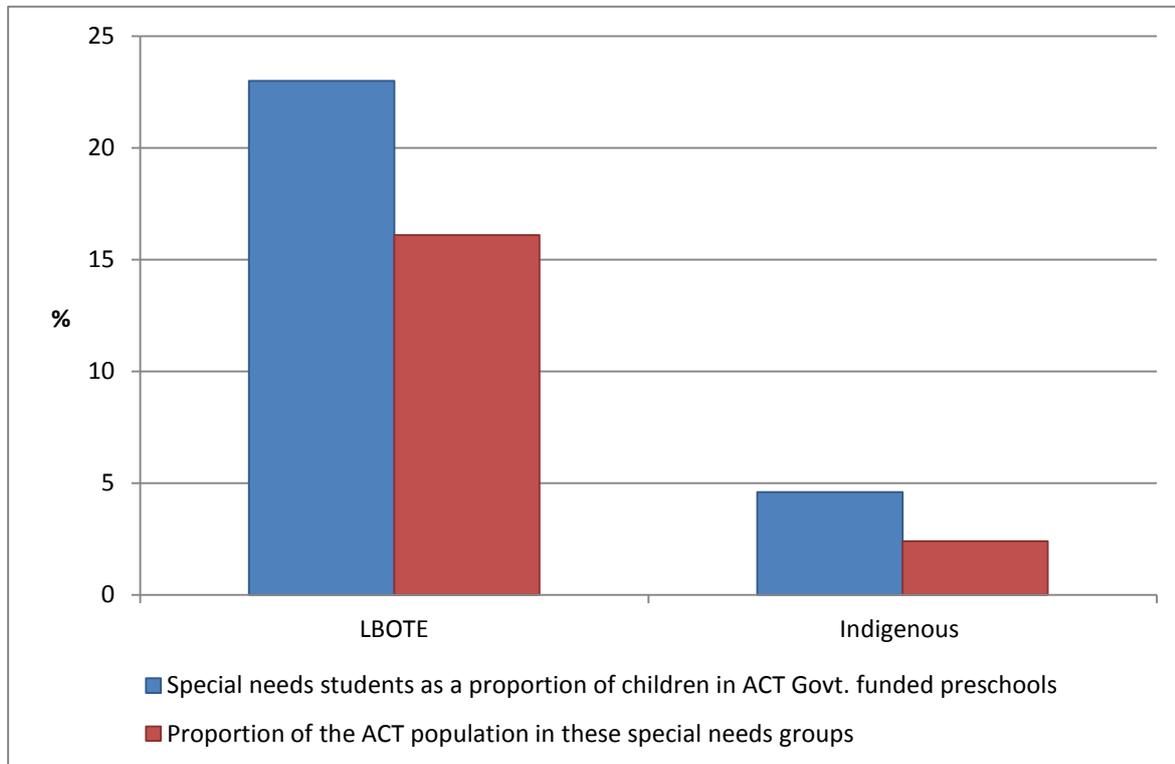


Source: Audit Office, Based on Report on Government Services 2012, Table 3A.13

- 2.30 Figure 2.2 shows that most ACT Preschool students attend ETD-delivered Preschool as opposed to Preschool delivered by non-government service providers. The ACT enrolment rate at government funded and/or provided Preschools is, however, lower than most other states (with the exception of New South Wales and Queensland). This may be explained in that there is a sizeable proportion of ACT children who are attending non-government Preschools (as shown in Table 2.1), although the ACT Government estimates that only 95.4 percent of all eligible ACT children attend Preschool.
- 2.31 Western Australia and Victoria have very high enrolments in government funded and/or provided Preschools. In Western Australia there is a universal Preschool program (similar to the ACT), with many of the schools being integrated with existing schools. In Victoria, the state government funds all Preschool programs, which may be delivered by a range of different providers including local government, community organisations and schools.
- 2.32 Queensland's significantly lower enrolment rates, referred to in Figure 2.2, are due to a reconfiguration of their schooling system in 2007, which resulted in the cessation of Preschool and the introduction of preparatory school. New South Wales has a lower rate of enrolment at government provided and/or funded Preschools, due to a comparatively large independent Preschool sector.

2.33 Figure 2.3 shows the proportion of ACT children aged three to five years from groups with additional needs enrolled in ACT Government funded and/or provided Preschools.

**Figure 2.3: Proportion of children (3–5 years) enrolled in ACT Government funded or provided Preschools from groups with additional needs (2010-11)**



Source: Audit Office, based on Report on Government Services 2012, Table 3.5

2.34 Figure 2.3 shows that LBOTE children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a greater proportional representation in ACT Government Preschools, compared to their representation in the broader community. As stated in section 2.37, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and LBOTE children are generally at a disadvantage to their peers with respect to early childhood schooling achievements. As these groups are over-represented in the ACT school system, it is important for ETD to provide additional early childhood schooling support and developmental services to these groups.

### ACT EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOLING ACHIEVEMENTS

2.35 There are no performance indicators that are specifically used as a measure of the effectiveness of the ACT’s early childhood schooling service delivery. Nevertheless, there are assessment tools and processes, which may be used as a proxy measure of the effectiveness of early childhood schooling, primarily as it relates to students’ educational achievements. These include:

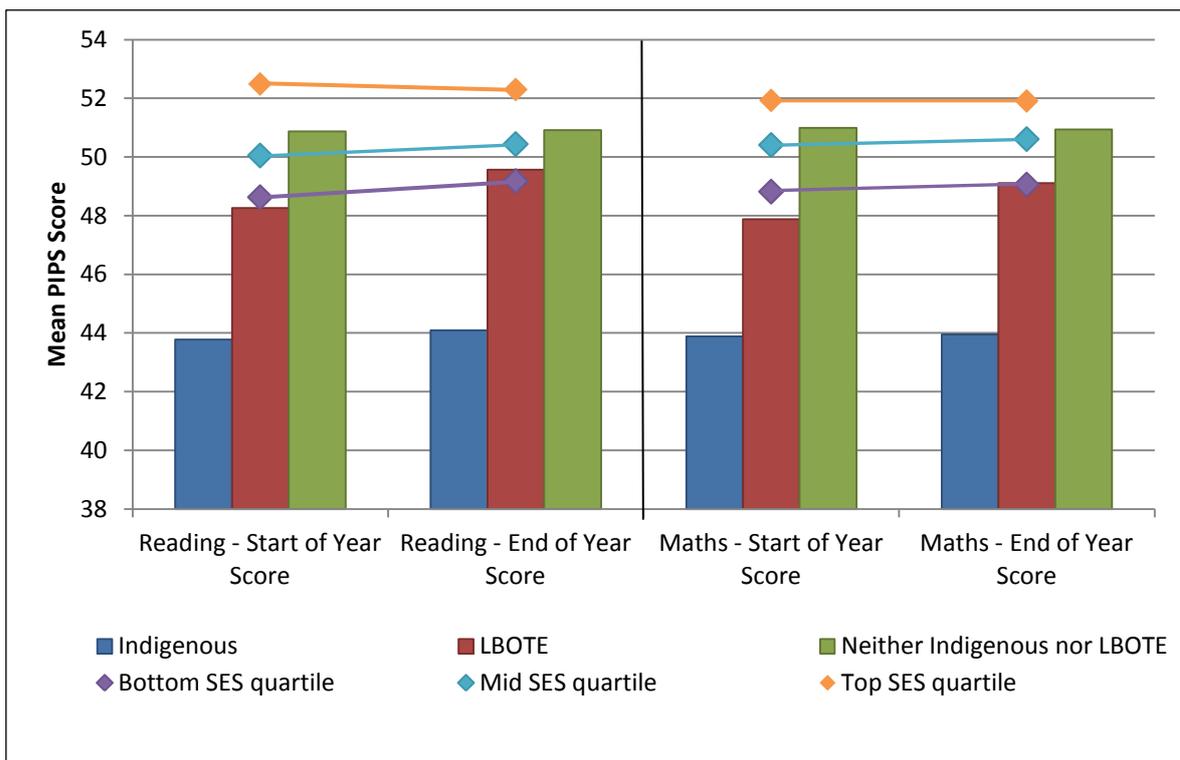
- Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) – Kindergarten; and
- National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) – Year 3.

**Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS)**

2.36 The Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) test is an assessment of a student’s skills at the start and end of their Kindergarten year. The test, which in 2010, was taken by more than 25 000 students across Australia, tests a student’s knowledge, literacy and numeracy skills and their phonological awareness. A student’s results at the commencement of the year demonstrates their educational capacity on entering Kindergarten, while comparing start and end results demonstrates the educational growth of the child over the course of the year.

2.37 In 2009 ETD commissioned a longitudinal study that sought to identify influences on student performance. This study has not been repeated since and some of the relevant data is comparatively old (i.e. up to 10 years old). Nevertheless, the data is useful to show the PIPS testing results of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LBOTE students compared with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-LBOTE students, along with the testing results for children within three socioeconomic quartiles.

**Figure 2.4: PIPS Kindergarten results by student group**



Source: Audit Office, based on data from Sartbayeva, A., Daly, A. and Watson, L. (2009) *Influences on student performance in primary school in the ACT*

**Conclusions from ACT Kindergarten PIPS results**

2.38 Figure 2.4 shows that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LBOTE students achieved lower PIPS results for both maths and reading compared with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-LBOTE students;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieved significantly lower PIPS results, compared with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- LBOTE students achieved measurably higher end results in both reading and maths, while all other students achieved marginally higher end results. This demonstrates that LBOTE students achieved better growth during the year compared to non-LBOTE students; and
- Students in the bottom SES quartile tested poorer than students in the mid and top SES quartile, for both the reading and maths tests at the start and end of the year. Students in the bottom SES quartile however showed greater growth during the year, compare to the other two quartiles.

2.39 The results of this study reinforce that there is a need to provide additional early childhood schooling support and developmental services for particular groups within the ACT community, including children from low SES groups, LBOTE children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

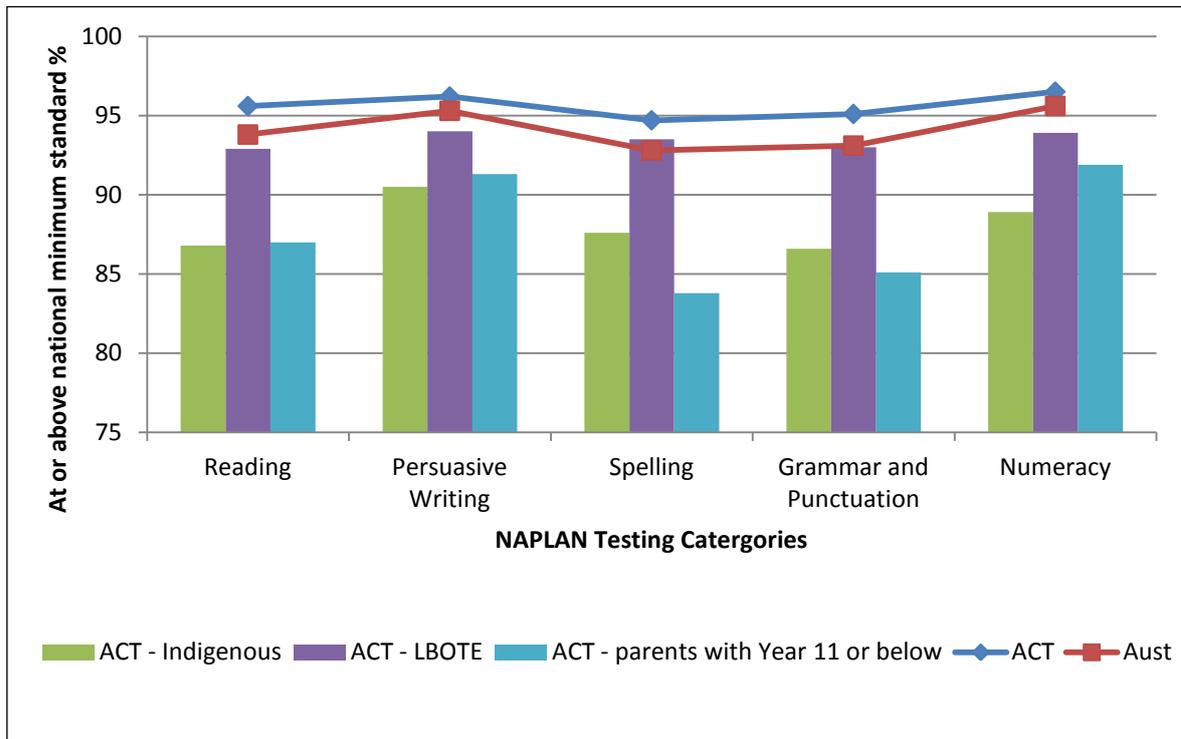
#### **National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)**

2.40 The National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests are conducted in May each year for all students across Australia in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. All students in the same year level are assessed on the same test items in the assessment domains of Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Numeracy.

2.41 All Australian states and territories report achievements against NAPLAN results as a measure of educational performance. Year 3 is the first year that students participate in the NAPLAN testing process (the year following ETD's definition of early childhood education).

2.42 Figure 2.5 shows the ACT's NAPLAN Year 3 results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LBOTE and students with parents that completed school to Year 11 (or below), compared to national average results and the ACT average results.

2.43 Figure 2.5 shows the percentage of students who are at or above the national minimum standard.

**Figure 2.5: ACT NAPLAN Year 3 results**

Source: Audit Office, based on NAPLAN National Report 2011

### Conclusions from ACT Year 3 NAPLAN results

2.44 Figure 2.5 shows:

- the percentage of ACT students at or above the national minimum standard is higher than the Australia-wide percentage;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, LBOTE children and children whose parents only completed schooling to Year 11 (or below) generally underperformed in all five of the NAPLAN testing categories when compared with the broader Australian student cohort. (The only exception is ACT LBOTE children, who outperformed the broader Australian student cohort in the spelling and grammar and punctuation tests); and
- LBOTE students in the ACT consistently performed better than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children whose parents only completed schooling to Year 11 or below.

2.45 The results demonstrate that there are children within the ACT community who are achieving lower educational outcomes than their peers. It is important for ETD to continue to provide additional early childhood schooling support and developmental services to assist these students improve their educational outcomes.



### 3. PLANNING FOR THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

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- 3.1 This chapter discusses ETD's planning for the delivery of early childhood schooling, including the identification of community needs and target groups for programs and services.

#### SUMMARY

##### Conclusion

There are some shortcomings in ETD's planning for early childhood schooling service delivery. While ETD has established its early childhood schooling programs and services to provide services to specific groups within the ACT community, there has not been a rigorous needs analysis and assessment to identify and quantify the community's needs, including the potential target group and number of enrolments.

##### Key findings

- While a number of ETD branches and sections have a role with respect to planning for service delivery, there is no clear identification of who is responsible and accountable for identifying, mapping and quantifying target group needs for particular programs and services.
- The *ACT Public Schools Enrolment Projections* document is a key document prepared by ETD to assist in its planning for program and service delivery. The document does not cover enrolment projections for some programs and services, including the Early Intervention Programs and Preschool Early Entry Programs.
- Within the Enrolment Projections document, planning for Koori Preschools and Special Schools/Special Classes in Mainstream Schools is done on the basis of 'existing demand and current planned enrolments'. There is no evidence of a rigorous needs analysis to identify and quantify particular target groups and their needs.
- Children from socially or economically disadvantaged families are an important group for the receipt of services from ETD. These children are not separately recognised and identified for planning purposes by ETD.
- Children from socially or economically disadvantaged families may come to the attention of other ACT Government agencies, including CSD and the Health Directorate. There are no formal inter-agency referral processes in place whereby relevant agencies identify and communicate with ETD regarding these children, to assist ETD with its planning for service delivery.

## **PLANNING ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES**

- 3.2 ETD branches with a role in planning for service delivery include:
- the Planning and Performance Branch (specifically the Schools Planning Section);
  - the Learning and Teaching Branch (Early Childhood Education section); and
  - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Student Support Branch (specifically the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education section and Disability Education section).
- 3.3 Additionally, ETD's Schools Planning Committee (for which the Schools Planning Section provides administrative support) also has an overarching governance role.

### ***Planning and Performance Branch***

- 3.4 The Planning and Performance Branch is responsible for *inter alia*:
- the collection, management, reporting and dissemination of a large range of Directorate data, and data relating to education in the ACT;
  - providing assistance to Directorate staff, including school staff, in their use of data; and
  - providing direction in the development of corporate strategic plans and associated planning processes, and a range of governance processes, including management of policies and support to school boards.
- 3.5 The Planning and Performance Branch also provides administrative support to the Schools Planning Committee. The Planning and Performance Branch produces the key Directorate planning document: the *ACT Public Schools Enrolment Projections* document.

### ***Learning and Teaching Branch***

- 3.6 The Learning and Teaching Branch has, in practice, policy and administrative responsibility for ETD's delivery of early childhood schooling. This includes programs and services up to and including Preschool.

### ***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Support Branch***

- 3.7 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Student Support Branch is responsible for 'strategic planning and management of school support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and for the delivery and coordination of disability education, student wellbeing and behaviour support'. In practice, the branch's focus is generally on programs and services from Kindergarten onwards.

### **Schools Planning Committee**

- 3.8 The Schools Planning Committee assists 'the Director-General and the Senior Executive Team to manage strategic issues and make recommendations for the Directorate on a range of planning, capacity and priority enrolment area (PEA) matters for ACT schools.' The Committee, which comprises senior ETD executives, makes recommendations to the Director-General and Directorate Executive on:
- routine issues related to school planning, including PEA changes and the need for new or updated policies and procedures;
  - major infrastructure requirements such as needs for new schools; and
  - short term critical issues relating to school planning needing executive consideration.

### **Responsibilities and accountabilities for identifying and quantifying needs**

- 3.9 Administrative roles and responsibilities are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of this report, where it is noted that responsibilities and accountabilities for the delivery of early childhood schooling programs and services to specific target groups are unclear.
- 3.10 With respect to planning for service delivery, there is no clear identification of which branch is responsible and accountable for identifying, mapping and quantifying target group needs for particular programs and services. This presents a risk to effective program and service delivery, as Audit has identified evidence of:
- poor identification and quantification of program and service target groups; and
  - poor distribution and placement of programs and services.
- 3.11 These shortcomings are discussed in Chapter 5 of the report. Audit considers that these shortcomings are partially due to a lack of clarity with respect to roles and responsibilities, including clear and unequivocal statements of accountabilities for program service delivery. Recommendation 4 in Chapter 4 seeks to address this shortcoming.

### **ETD'S ENROLMENT PROJECTIONS**

- 3.12 The *ACT Public Schools Enrolment Projections* document (produced by the Planning and Performance Branch) is the key planning document for ETD's education service delivery.
- 3.13 The document 'provides the latest update of student enrolment projections for all Australian Capital Territory (ACT) public schools as a broad guide for internal planning purposes.' It identifies projected enrolments over a five-year period

and is normally produced annually. It was not produced in 2011 due to other Directorate priorities.

3.14 As a means for planning for mainstream education service delivery, from Preschool to Year 12, the document is useful for planning purposes. Key data sources for the 2010 document were:

- current enrolment trends in ACT public schools;
- *ACT Population Projections for Suburbs and Districts 2007 to 2019* (Chief Minister's Department, 2009); and
- ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA) forecasts of future dwelling occupancies from 2009 to 2019.

3.15 This is a reasonable approach (provided that source data is validated on an annual basis when re-issuing the document).

### **Planning on the basis of existing demand and current planned arrangements**

3.16 The *ACT Public Schools Enrolment Projections* document provides information on enrolments in:

- Koori Preschool Programs;
- Early Childhood Schools; and
- Special Schools / Special Classes in Mainstream Schools. This includes special schools (e.g. Malkara and Cranleigh) and special classes (Learning Support Units and Learning Support Classes within schools for children with additional needs).

3.17 The document does not provide information on enrolments in the Early Intervention Program. This shortcoming is particularly significant. There is evidence of poor distribution and placement of these services, which may be shifted to accommodate a need for 'higher priority' mainstream Preschool classes. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

3.18 Furthermore, the document does not provide information on enrolments in the Preschool Early Entry Programs. Places under these programs are only offered in the year before formal preschooling, and only if there is space in existing Preschool classes. Formally recognising these services in the planning document would raise the profile of the program in ETD's planning processes and provide a stronger basis on which to plan for the services. There is a risk that potential early entry placements, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LBOTE children, do not access these services as there is no capacity in existing Preschool classes. Factoring in the Preschool Early Entry Program into the planning document would mitigate this risk.

3.19 Planning for Koori Preschool Programs and Special Schools/Special Classes in Mainstream Schools is done on the basis of 'existing demand and current

planned arrangements.' That is, there is no evidence of a rigorous needs analysis identifying and quantifying the particular target groups and their needs, undertaken on the basis of demographic and population information and trends. The starting point for planning for these services is existing service delivery. In the 2010 document, Audit notes that the same enrolment figures are projected across all five years of the plan to 2014 for these programs and services.

**Recommendation 2 (Chapter 3)**

ETD should enhance its planning for its early childhood schooling programs and services by:

- a) incorporating planning for the Early Intervention Program and the Preschool Early Entry Programs within the *ACT Public Schools Enrolment Projections* document;
- b) ensuring all planning for program and service delivery is underpinned by a rigorous needs analysis identifying and quantifying particular target groups and their needs; and

**IDENTIFYING CHILDREN FROM SOCIALLY OR ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES**

- 3.20 A group of children who are at risk of not achieving desired educational outcomes are children from socially or economically disadvantaged families. Children from socially or economically disadvantaged families have been identified as a potential target group for the Early Childhood Schools.
- 3.21 Children from socially or economically disadvantaged families are not separately identified or quantified for planning purposes by ETD. Better recognition and identification of these children by ETD could facilitate more effective planning for service delivery, particularly with respect to the Early Childhood Schools.
- 3.22 The *ACT Early Childhood Schools Initiative Evaluation Framework (May 2010)* identifies a range of children who may be identified as particularly vulnerable. The framework identifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from families who are financially poor, children who are culturally and linguistically diverse (especially those who are recently arrived refugees), children who suffer trauma including parental incapacity (such as imprisonment, mental health and substance use problems) and children who are in contact with child protection and/or out of home care systems.
- 3.23 There are likely to be numerous opportunities by which these vulnerable children from socially or economically disadvantaged families could be identified and communicated to ETD by other ACT Government agencies such as the Health Directorate or CSD, e.g. through Maternal and Child Health (MACH) nurses or attendance at CSD's Child and Family Centres. At present, however, there are no formal inter-agency referral processes in place whereby all relevant ACT

Government agencies identify and communicate with ETD regularly children from socially or economically disadvantaged families. An exception to this is children under CSD care and protection orders, whereby ETD is informed because of the CSD Director-General's guardianship role for the child.

- 3.24 Audit suggests there is an opportunity for better information sharing and referral processes from the Health Directorate and CSD to ETD. In saying this, however, it should also be recognised that there is a very real possibility that children from socially or economically disadvantaged families may not come to the attention of any ACT Government directorate if they do not attend childcare or receive any services from the Health Directorate or CSD. There may also be privacy or other legislative considerations, which restrict agencies' ability to share information.
- 3.25 Audit notes that there appears to be a mature referral process from Therapy ACT (part of CSD) to ETD's Early Intervention Program for children with a disability or with additional needs. These arrangements are governed by an inter-agency Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which was implemented at the commencement of 2010. There is currently no similar MoU arrangement in place with either CSD or Health Directorate, with respect to the referral of children from socially or economically disadvantaged families.

### **Recommendation 2 (Chapter 3)**

ETD should enhance its planning for its early childhood schooling programs and services by:

- c) developing formal arrangements with the Community Services Directorate and Health Directorate for the identification and referral of children from socially or economically disadvantaged families to ETD.

## 4. MANAGING SERVICE DELIVERY

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- 4.1 This chapter discusses ETD's management and administrative arrangements for its early childhood schooling programs and services. ETD's business and operational planning processes, risk management and program assurance arrangements, including monitoring and evaluation of service delivery are considered.

### SUMMARY

#### Conclusion

There are some shortcomings in ETD's management of its early childhood schooling programs and services. There is a lack of clearly defined objectives for the programs and services, which leads to ambiguity in service delivery and may lead to waste in public expenditure. The lack of clearly defined objectives, combined with shortcomings in business and operational planning, risk management practices and review and assurance mechanisms, means that ETD cannot demonstrate that it is implementing the programs effectively or that the community is receiving value for money.

#### Key findings

- The current administrative arrangements within ETD leads to shared policy and administrative responsibility for the delivery of early childhood schooling services to key groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, LBOTE students and students with additional needs, between two ETD branches. Shared responsibility during the critical early childhood schooling period impairs ETD's ability to have continuity and consistency in communication and engagement with families from these groups.
- Aspects of the administration of ETD early childhood schooling programs and services considered as part of this audit, including the Early Childhood Schools, Koori Preschool Programs, Early Intervention Programs and Preschool Early Entry Programs have been devolved to the schools as part of the broader school-based management process. The devolution of administrative responsibility to the schools presents both risks and opportunities to effective service delivery. The current lack of clarity associated with administrative responsibilities and accountabilities heightens risks associated with the effective delivery of these programs and services.
- Early childhood schooling programs and services considered as part of this audit have poorly described objectives. This creates ambiguity and has also impaired the ability of ETD to demonstrate the effectiveness of its programs and services.
- Despite the Early Childhood Schools being established in parts of Canberra where there was a perceived need for the delivery of services to socially or

economically disadvantaged children and their families, ETD is not specifically identifying and targeting children from socially or economically disadvantaged families for enrolment at these schools. This leads to a risk that the benefits of the schools, primarily associated with the integrated service delivery model that creates seamless access to services for children and their families, are not made use of by the children and families who would likely significantly benefit.

- There is a lack of business and operational planning associated with the early childhood schooling programs and services. Current branch business plans are activity and input focused and do not clearly articulate details associated with the management and implementation of the programs and services.
- There is a lack of risk management associated with the programs, including risk assessments and risk management plans for each of the programs and services.
- Key performance indicators have not been developed for the early childhood schooling programs and services. Some performance measures have been identified and articulated in branch business plans, but these are activity-based and input focused. They do not facilitate a full assessment of the effectiveness or otherwise of the programs and services.
- Administrative and procedural guidance associated with the early childhood schooling programs and services varies considerably. Some programs and services do not have administrative and procedural guidance, while guidance for other programs and services is inconsistent in form and content.
- Program and service delivery is not evaluated on a regular basis. As a result, ETD cannot provide assurance that its programs and services are effective, meeting intended policy outcomes or offering value for money.

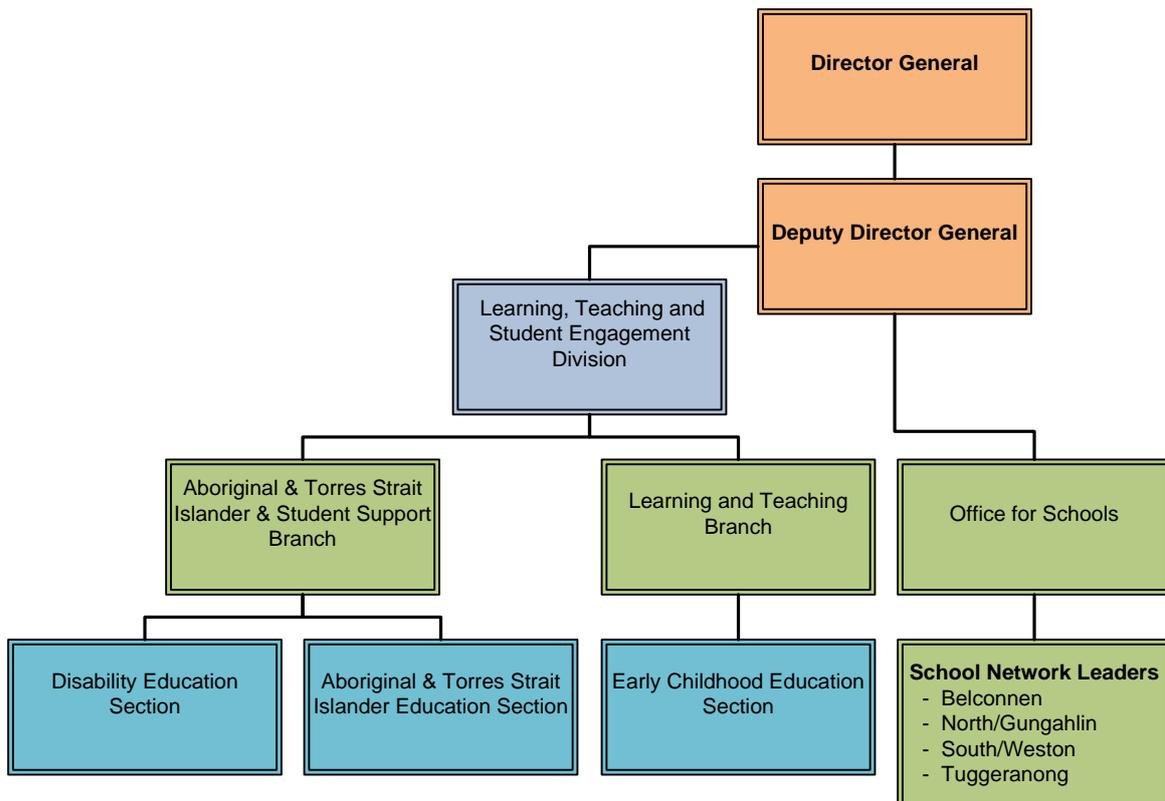
## **ETD'S ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOLING**

4.2 ETD has complex organisational arrangements for the delivery of early childhood schooling services. Complexity derives from:

- the number of divisions and branches with policy and administrative responsibility for service delivery; and
- the continuing devolution of education service delivery administration to school networks.

4.3 Figure 4.1 is an extract from ETD's organisational chart. It shows the two branches with policy and administrative responsibility (the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Student Support Branch and the Learning and Teaching Branch) and lines of reporting and accountability for ETD's schools and school networks.

**Figure 4.1: Extract from Education and Training Directorate organisation chart**



Source: Audit Office, based on Education and Training Directorate’s Organisation Chart 13 December 2011.

**‘Central office’ policy and administrative responsibility**

4.4 Within ETD’s ‘central office’ structure, there are a number of branches and sections with a policy and administrative interest in the delivery of early childhood schooling programs and services. These include:

- the Early Childhood Education section (Learning and Teaching Branch);
- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education section (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Student Support Branch); and
- Disability Education section (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Student Support Branch).

**Learning and Teaching Branch**

4.5 The Learning and Teaching Branch, specifically the Early Childhood Education section, has policy (and some administrative) responsibility for programs and services delivered to children up to and including Preschool. This includes those programs and services targeted towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Koori Preschool Programs and Preschool Early Entry Programs) and students with additional needs (Early Intervention Program and Preschool Early Entry Programs).

### ***Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Student Support Branch***

- 4.6 The Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Student Support Branch is responsible for the 'development of policy, strategic planning and management of school support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and for the delivery and coordination of disability education, student wellbeing and behaviour support.' The branch manages a range of programs and services with a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with additional needs, including:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander School Liaison Officers; and
  - support teachers and Learning Support Units for children with additional needs.
- 4.7 In practice the branch's 'policy, strategic planning and management of school support' is focused on students from Kindergarten onwards.
- 4.8 The branch has no responsibility or accountability for the planning and management of early childhood schooling programs and services such as the Koori Preschool Programs or Early Intervention Program.

### ***Administrative responsibility during the critical early childhood years***

- 4.9 ETD's current administrative arrangements divide administrative responsibility between the Learning and Teaching Branch and the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Student Support Branch in the midst of the critical early childhood phase of a child's education and development. This has implications for the particular target groups which are the focus of ETD's programs and services, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, LBOTE children and children with additional needs.
- 4.10 In effect, there are specific programs and services for these target groups up to and including the Preschool year (managed by the Learning and Teaching Branch) and separate programs and services for these children from Kindergarten onwards (managed by the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Student Support Branch). This means that there is a split in responsibility and accountability for achieving improved early childhood schooling outcomes for key target groups. Audit appreciates that there is ongoing communication between the branches and sections, which minimises the risk of ineffective administration.
- 4.11 The difficulty of shared responsibility is most apparent with respect to providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Audit was advised that there are particular difficulties and challenges associated with communicating and engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their children to achieve better educational outcomes through improved enrolments and attendance. As noted in the previous chapter, research has demonstrated that this needs to be achieved as early as possible. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders consulted during the audit have identified the difficulties

and inefficiencies associated with seeking to engage with two separate branches in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education issues.

- 4.12 With respect to students with additional needs, Audit notes that the split in responsibility between the two branches has led to separate processes for the recording and managing of information on children with disabilities and additional needs. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Student Support Branch has an information system which records and tracks children through their educational career. However, information with respect to the provision of services under the Early Intervention Program (delivered by the Learning and Teaching Branch) are not recorded in this system.
- 4.13 The separate practices in the branches are likely to exacerbate problems associated with the management of student transitions from the Early Intervention Program to other schooling activities. This was highlighted as an area that needed attention in a 2011 review of the Early Intervention Program (discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

#### **School networks administrative responsibility**

- 4.14 The continuing devolution of administrative responsibility for education service delivery to schools under School Based Management (SBM) reforms, which commenced in 2008, contributes to the complexity in ETD's early childhood schooling organisational arrangements.
- 4.15 SBM seeks to devolve administrative responsibility for education service delivery to those at the forefront of school operations (i.e. principals, teachers, parents and community members) on the basis that they are best placed to make decisions that support the needs of students and of the local community. The objective of school decision-making is to contribute to improved performance and better outcomes for students. Accordingly, schools have greater autonomy over decision-making, but are also held to account for their decisions through the ETD's School Improvement performance management process.
- 4.16 Specific early childhood schooling programs and services that have been devolved to the school networks from the Early Childhood Education section are:
- Preschool Early Entry Programs - LBOTE and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early entry enrolment processes have been devolved to the schools since 2010, while mobility and gifted and talented early entry enrolment processes have been retained within the Early Childhood Education section;
  - Early Childhood Schools – devolved to school networks in 2010;
  - Koori Preschools – devolved to school networks through a successful pilot program in 2011; and
  - Early Intervention Programs – devolved to school networks from 2012.

- 4.17 Practically, devolution of administrative responsibility to the school networks involves:
- schools' taking responsibility for receiving and managing enrolments under the programs; and
  - managing program and service delivery in accordance with any policy or procedural guidance.
- 4.18 Discussions with ETD representatives indicate that there is currently a lack of clarity around administrative responsibilities and accountabilities for the programs and services following devolution to the school networks. Furthermore, branch business plans and governance documents do not clearly identify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for these programs. In particular, there are significant shortcomings associated with articulating responsibility and accountability for:
- identifying target groups, need and priorities;
  - promoting the programs and services to target groups and identified communities; and
  - monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the programs and services.
- 4.19 Management of these programs and services through the school networks offers both opportunities for, and risks to, effective service delivery. Greater opportunities derive from the potential to adopt flexible and adaptive service delivery practices, which may be better suited to local communities and their needs. Risks to service delivery derive from inconsistency and potential inequity in service delivery and the lack of centralised, coordinated oversight and monitoring.
- 4.20 Audit considers that the development and articulation of clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for program service delivery will facilitate more effective service delivery.

### **Recommendation 3 (Chapter 4)**

ETD should ensure all roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for the delivery of early childhood schooling programs and services are more clearly articulated and documented in ETD governance and program documents.

## **OPERATIONAL PLANNING FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOLING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

- 4.21 Audit sought to identify whether operational planning for the early childhood programs and services was effective. In recognition of their development and implementation to address perceived needs in the community, Audit sought to identify whether the programs and services had:

- clearly defined objectives;
- operational plans to guide their implementation;
- robust risk management practices; and
- relevant key performance indicators, which supported the defined outcomes and objectives.

### **Program objectives**

4.22 Defined objectives are important to clearly and explicitly state, for program managers and external stakeholders alike, the purpose of the programs and services and the achievements that are sought. They are needed to prevent ambiguity in program administration, which leads to waste in public expenditure. Program objectives may be articulated in the agency Statement of Performance or other program and governance documentation.

### **Early Intervention Programs**

4.23 The Early Intervention Programs are the only programs that are explicitly referenced in ETD's Statement of Performance. The Statement of Performance states:

The Directorate provides Early Intervention programs to children, between the ages of two to five years, who have a disability or developmental delay. Early learning and development programs identify and address the physical, emotional, social and educational needs of children from birth to five years.

4.24 While useful, this statement does not clearly and explicitly state the outcomes that are sought from the delivery of the services to the children.

### **Preschool Early Entry Programs**

4.25 The Early Entry Eligibility and Procedures document serves to articulate the purpose of the Preschool Early Entry Programs. The document outlines the eligibility requirements and the administrative processes for enrolling children in the program. It covers English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), gifted and talented and mobility placements, but does not cover Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or hearing and vision impaired placements.

4.26 The document does not clearly state the purpose of the program or the objectives that are sought, such as:

- educational expectations of enrolled students in the program; or
- priorities for enrolments. There is no documented statement of priorities for the program, which would provide guidance to administrators to make decisions on allocating places to potentially competing students, e.g. gifted and talented students as opposed to EALD students.

### ***Koori Preschool Programs***

- 4.27 There are no program governance documents in place for the Koori Preschool Programs. Audit found that there is confusion amongst stakeholders about the nature and purpose of the Koori Preschool Programs, with differing viewpoints as to what the programs are expected to achieve. Stakeholders commented on confusion about whether the programs were designed to:
- facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s early entry into Preschool, using a mainstream curriculum to overcome potential barriers to children’s readiness for school; and/or
  - deliver a cultural-specific education and learning curriculum to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- 4.28 Some stakeholders also suggested that the primary purpose of the Koori Preschool Programs was offering the opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to commence their educational career in a ‘culturally safe’ environment with their peers.
- 4.29 Audit had the opportunity to visit some Koori Preschool Programs and observed that while there are elements of both in the delivery of the programs, the programs primarily seek to overcome potential barriers to a child’s readiness for school. The emphasis is on preparing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for school by using a mainstream curriculum, supported by cultural-specific education and learning tools.
- 4.30 During the course of audit fieldwork, Audit received comment from parents and stakeholders indicating that there was too little focus on delivering cultural-specific education and learning opportunities and this was a potential shortcoming of the programs. Audit suggests that clarification as to the objectives sought from the programs would provide a stronger foundation for the management and administration of the programs by reducing the current ambiguity.

### ***Early Childhood Schools***

- 4.31 The *Early Childhood Schools Framework* (the Framework) defines the objectives of the Early Childhood Schools. The Framework states that the Early Childhood Schools will further the goals of the *School Excellence Initiative*, the *ACT Children’s Plan* and the *Canberra Social Plan (Building our Community)*. In the best interests of the child, the schools will support overarching outcomes of:
- providing excellent schooling;
  - strengthening families; and
  - building communities.
- 4.32 According to ACT Government Cabinet documents:

It is proposed that from the outset, early childhood schools will offer, in addition to their Preschool to year 2 classes, access to:

- child care services for children prior to school entry and also before and after school and vacation care;
- parent support and education; and
- targeted services for children and families with specific needs, including early intervention services.<sup>8</sup>

#### Early Childhood Schools rationale and purpose

4.33 The information provided in the Framework is broad, and there is no specific statement as to the purpose of the schools with respect to target groups and priorities. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that there is a specific role for the schools with respect to the delivery of services to socially or economically disadvantaged children and their families.

4.34 According to ACT Government Cabinet documents:

...the case for early childhood schools developing as early learning and development centres (birth to eight) is based on research evidence that the success of all children, at school and in later life, is dependent on crucial developmental experiences in their first three years. Improving early years' provision is particularly important for children at risk. Investments in children's early years also have a high cost-benefit ratio.<sup>9</sup>

4.35 Audit was advised that the United Kingdom's SureStart Program, as well as other international programs, particularly from Canada, were key influences on the development of the Early Childhood Schools initiative.

4.36 In support of this, the *ACT Early Childhood Schools Initiative Evaluation Framework (May 2010)* identified that one of the rationales of the Early Childhood Schools was the need to address the particular challenges faced by children who are socially or economically disadvantaged. Accordingly, the schools were intended to provide an integrated service model that facilitates seamless access to services for children and their families, based on the premise that children's learning is interlinked to their health status and sense of well-being. Based on this it is understood that the schools were located in areas where there was a perceived need for these services (Narrabundah, Isabella Plains, Lyons and Scullin).

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<sup>8</sup> ACT Government Cabinet Minute, Decision No.3452, 29 October 2007.

<sup>9</sup> ACT Government Cabinet Minute, Decision No.3452, 29 October 2007.

- 4.37 The *ACT Early Childhood Schools Initiative Evaluation Framework (May 2010)* identifies a range of children who may be identified as vulnerable and who could benefit most from the schools. The framework identifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from families who are financially poor, children who are culturally and linguistically diverse (especially those who are recently arrived refugees), children who suffer trauma including parental incapacity (such as imprisonment, mental health and substance use problems) and children who are in contact with child protection and/or out of home care systems.
- 4.38 Notwithstanding the apparent purpose of the Early Childhood Schools with respect to the delivery of services to socially or economically disadvantaged children, there is no specific recognition of target groups and priorities by ETD.
- 4.39 The Early Childhood Schools are a more expensive model of service delivery for early childhood schooling. This is primarily because of the schools' small size (only catering for students up to Year 2), the need to maintain basic administrative and governance structures and the lack of opportunity to achieve economies of scale and efficiencies with respect to operational and administrative costs across a larger student population. Table 4.5a of the report compares the relative notional recurrent income of the Early Childhood Schools with other primary schools. Other schools for comparison were chosen on the basis that they are P-6 schools (which represent the most common form of public primary school in the ACT) and their location, adjacent to the Early Childhood Schools. Audit notes that these figures do not account for costs incurred by other ACT Government agencies involved in delivering services at the schools, including the Health Directorate and Community Services Directorate.
- 4.40 The comparatively high costs of the Early Childhood Schools may be justified on the basis that they are delivering services to children and their families who are socially or economically disadvantaged. At present, however, children who are socially or economically disadvantaged are not separately identified or quantified for planning purposes by ETD, nor is there a systematic attempt to identify and target families or children as part of its planning processes. ETD cannot identify the proportion of children at the schools who are socially or economically disadvantaged.
- 4.41 ETD staff and external stakeholders identified that the schools have become desirable 'schools of choice' for the ACT community, who recognise the benefits of the suite of services that are offered through the schools, and this may be to the detriment of those members of the community who could benefit most from the schools. Index of Community Socio-Economic Advantage (ICSEA) data, which measures the relative socio-economic status of the schools is inconclusive on this issue. When compared to nearby ACT primary schools, there is evidence to suggest that the Early Childhood Schools (with the exception of Narrabundah) are not meeting the specific needs of socially or economically disadvantaged families within their areas. Appendix F provides information on the ICSEA values

of ACT public schools in the four regions in which the Early Childhood Schools are located.

- 4.42 Better articulation of the objectives of the Early Childhood Schools is needed. This should include an explicit statement as to the purpose of the schools with respect to socially or economically disadvantaged children and their status as potential target groups and priorities. Consideration may also be given to the ACT Government's commitment to the *Closing the Gap Strategy*, and its focus on engaging vulnerable and at risk Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for access to education and care services. This would establish an appropriate basis on which the schools could be managed and subsequently evaluated.

#### **Recommendation 4 (Chapter 4)**

ETD should ensure that all early childhood schooling programs and services have clearly articulated and documented purposes and objectives. ETD should specifically ensure that:

- a) the purpose and objectives sought from the Koori Preschool Programs are clearly identified and documented; and
- b) the purpose of the Early Childhood Schools is clearly articulated and documented, particularly with respect to delivering services to socially or economically disadvantaged.

#### **Business and operational planning**

- 4.43 Business and operational planning is important to articulate the means and mechanisms by which programs and services are to be implemented. Business and operational planning documents should serve as a reference point for relevant managers and administrators, and be a means by which program managers and administrators are held accountable for implementation.
- 4.44 There are no specific business or operational plans in place for any of the early childhood schooling programs or services considered as part of this audit. In the absence of program-specific business or operational plans, ETD relies on branch business plans.

#### **Branch business planning**

- 4.45 Audit reviewed the 2011-12 business plans of the Learning and Teaching Branch and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Support Branch and identified that the plans each contain a series of activities (with supporting key performance measures) against the Directorate's strategic priorities.
- 4.46 Within the Learning and Teaching Branch business plan, the following activities were identified against the Directorate's strategic priority of 'close the learning achievement gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students':

- Koori Preschool Programs continue to be offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in five settings;
- promotion of Koori Preschool Programs amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community;
- complete and evaluate the trial of school-based management of the above Koori Preschool Programs to create enhanced partnerships with local Preschool and school community;
- support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Preschool; and
- support ETD staff to develop cultural competence in early childhood settings through professional learning workshops.

4.47 Furthermore, the following activities were identified against the Directorate's strategic priority of 'strengthen student engagement and learning outcomes by enhancing student support and intervention services':

- conduct a Review of the Early Childhood Intervention Programs and implement the recommendations from the Review; and
- provide Early Childhood Intervention Programs to children aged 2-5 years who have, or are at risk of, a developmental delay or disability.

4.48 Audit notes that the branch business plans are activity-based as opposed to outcome-focused. While there is alignment of the branch's activities with the Directorate's strategic priorities, there is a lack of specific detail associated with the programs and services' management and implementation including:

- objectives sought from the program or service;
- needs and priorities for the program or service, including identified target groups;
- key performance indicators;
- roles and responsibilities for management and administration;
- critical interdependencies for implementation;
- risks in program or service implementation, including mitigation strategies; and
- monitoring, reporting and evaluation protocols.

4.49 Shortcomings in current branch business plans, combined with a lack of program and service-specific planning documents, are likely to impair the management and administration of ETD's early childhood schooling services.

**Recommendation 5 (Chapter 4)****Program management**

ETD should ensure that all early childhood schooling programs and services have:

- a) business and operational plans to inform program management and administration. Business and operational plans should articulate the means and mechanisms by which programs and services are to be implemented;

**Risk management**

4.50 Program risk management is the systematic identification, analysis and management of uncertainty in service delivery. Conducting a risk assessment and subsequently monitoring and reporting against the risks through a risk management plan allows program managers and administrators to more effectively manage a program's implementation.

4.51 Risk assessments have not been conducted for the early childhood schooling programs and services, nor have risk management plans been developed.

4.52 The management and administration of ETD's early childhood schooling services would be enhanced by program-specific risk assessments and risk management plans. These would serve as a means by which risks to the achievement of program objectives could be systematically identified, managed, monitored and reported against.

**Recommendation 5 (Chapter 4)****Program management**

ETD should ensure that all early childhood schooling programs and services have:

- b) program risk management practices, including risk assessments and risk management plans;

**Key performance indicators**

4.53 Key performance indicators are a useful component of an overall program performance management and assurance framework. Effective performance indicators facilitate ongoing monitoring and assessment of program performance. They assist internal and external stakeholders to understand whether programs and services are being implemented effectively, and provide an opportunity for program managers to take corrective action if necessary.

4.54 As noted previously in Chapter 2, there are no overall key performance indicators in place for ETD with respect to early childhood schooling, such as enrolment and educational achievement indicators.

4.55 With respect to the particular early childhood schooling programs and services considered as part of this audit, there are minimal key performance indicators in place, as follows.

**Early Intervention Programs**

4.56 The Early Intervention Programs are the only programs that have identified performance indicators in ETD’s Statement of Performance. These include quantitative targets for participation in the programs as well as some activity and output indicators. Table 4.1 shows the Early Intervention Programs’ performance indicators and achievements in the three years to 2010-11.

**Table 4.1: Statement of Performance indicators targets and results for the Early Intervention Programs**

	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11	
	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result
Output 1a	450	470	450	430	450	392
Output 1b	100%	99%	100%	Not Measured	100%	100%
Output 1c	90%	98%	90%	99%	90%	98%
Output 1a: Number of eligible children with development delays and disabilities who attend an early intervention program Output 1b: Individual Learning Plans commenced within one month of the student’s first attendance at an early intervention program Output 1c: Parent satisfaction with their children’s progress in an early intervention placement as measured by annual survey						

Source: Audit Office, Education and Training Directorate Annual Reports

4.57 While useful, these performance indicators do not facilitate a full assessment of the effectiveness of the Early Intervention Programs, as they do not provide an indication of students’ educational progress or achievements. The performance indicators do not facilitate an assessment of the achievement of the programs outcome, which is to ‘identify and address the physical, emotional, social and educational needs of children from birth to five years.’

4.58 Audit also notes that the Learning and Teaching Branch business plan also articulates some key performance measures for the Early Intervention Programs, as shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Strategic Priorities, Actions and Performance Measures relevant to the Early Intervention Programs in Learning and Teaching Branch business plan 2011-12**

Strategic Priority	Actions	Performance Measures
Strengthen student engagement and learning outcomes by enhancing student support and intervention services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a Review of the Early Childhood Intervention Programs and implement the recommendations from the Review</li> <li>• Provide Early Childhood Intervention Programs to children aged 2-5 years who have, or are at risk of, a developmental delay or disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations implemented</li> <li>• The number of children accessing Early Intervention programs</li> <li>• The percentage of parent and staff feedback about programs recording a high level of satisfaction</li> </ul>
Strengthen student engagement and learning outcomes by enhancing student support and intervention services	Delivery of COAG national agenda, relevant professional learning and other provision of support for Early Childhood Education programs and planning	The percentage of teachers attending professional learning workshops recording a satisfactory or higher feedback rating

Source: Audit Office, based on ETD’s Learning and Teaching Branch Strategic Plan 2011-12

4.59 Similar to earlier comments on the key performance indicators identified in ETD’s Statement of Performance, Audit notes that the performance measures identified in the Learning and Teaching Branch’s business plan are activity and input focused and do not facilitate a full assessment of the effectiveness of the program, as indicated by students’ outcomes. Audit also notes that the performance measures do not identify specific quantitative targets for achievements.

**Koori Preschool Programs**

4.60 The Learning and Teaching Branch business plan similarly articulates some key performance measures for the Koori Preschool Program as shown in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Strategic Priorities, Actions and Performance Measures relevant to Koori Preschool Program in the Learning and Teaching Branch business plan 2011-12**

Strategic Priority	Actions	Performance Measures
Close the learning achievement gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students	Koori Preschool programs continue to be offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in five settings	The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attending
	Promotion of Koori Preschool programs amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community	
	Complete and evaluate the trial of school-based management of the above Koori Preschool programs to create enhanced partnerships with local Preschool and school community	Trial completed and management of programs has moved to schools

Source: Audit Office, based on ETD’s Learning and Teaching Branch Strategic Plan 2011-12

4.61 Similar to earlier comments on the Early Intervention Program key performance indicators, the performance measures identified for the Koori Preschool Programs are activity and input focused and do not facilitate a full assessment of the effectiveness of the program, as indicated by students’ outcomes. Further, the performance measures do not identify specific quantitative targets for achievement.

**Preschool Early Entry Programs**

4.62 The Learning and Teaching Branch business plan also recognises the branch’s activities associated with the Preschool Early Entry Programs. However, there is minimal recognition and articulation of performance indicators, as shown in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Strategic Priorities, Actions and Performance Measures relevant to Preschool Early Entry Programs in the Learning and Teaching Branch business plan 2011-12**

Strategic Priority	Actions	Performance Measures
Strengthen student engagement and learning outcomes by enhancing student support and intervention services	Support parents and carers to apply, and process Early Entry applications for students who are Gifted and Talented, Mobility, ESL or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Early Entry applications processed in a timely manner
	Delivery of the <i>Support at Preschool</i> resourcing for children with delays and/or disabilities	Payments processed

Source: Audit Office, based on ETD’s Learning and Teaching Branch Strategic Plan 2011-12

**Recommendation 5 (Chapter 4)**

**Program management**

ETD should ensure that all early childhood schooling programs and services have:

- c) key performance indicators. The key performance indicators should be sufficiently precise to inform management and administration and facilitate ongoing assessment and reporting on the achievement of program objectives;

**ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE**

4.63 Devolution of administrative responsibility to schools increases the risk of inconsistent and inequitable program and service delivery as the programs are no longer administered and coordinated in a central location. Accordingly, to minimise this risk it is important that administrative and procedural guidance is in place to guide the administration of programs and services in schools.

4.64 Audit found that there was inconsistent documentation of administrative and procedural guidance for the different programs and services that are relevant to the audit.

**Early Childhood Schools and Koori Preschool Programs**

4.65 There are no specific administrative or procedural guidelines in place for the Early Childhood Schools or the Koori Preschool Programs.

### Early Intervention Programs

- 4.66 A comprehensive Staff Handbook has been developed by the Early Childhood Education section (Learning and Teaching Branch) for staff working in the Early Intervention Programs. The Staff Handbook provides practical guidance on administrative practices and processes associated with the management of the program.
- 4.67 ETD also has a brief directorate-wide policy statement regarding students with a disability, *Students with a Disability: Meeting their educational needs*, which provides the overall policy context for the Early Intervention Programs.

### Preschool Early Entry Programs

- 4.68 Formal ETD administrative guidance has been developed for the Preschool Early Entry Programs. The Early Entry Eligibility and Procedures document (3 pages) is available on the ETD intranet and outlines the eligibility requirements and the administrative processes for enrolling children in the program. It covers English as an additional language or dialect, gifted and talented and mobility placements, but does not cover Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or hearing and vision impaired placements.
- 4.69 While the document describes eligibility requirements and administrative processes for the program it does not address all early entry placement categories and does not provide any guidance with respect to priorities or needs for the programs and services, e.g. are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments a higher priority than gifted and talented enrolments?

### Recommendation 5 (Chapter 4)

#### Program management

ETD should ensure that all early childhood schooling programs and services have:

- d) administrative and procedural guidance for staff.

### EVALUATING PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- 4.70 Program evaluation is a key component of the ACT Government's whole-of-government performance and accountability framework. The ACT Government's *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government* document identifies agency policy and program evaluation as one of four key principles in improving performance and accountability. The framework states that agencies should take a continued and long-term approach to evaluation by:
- fostering a culture of evaluation;

- building evaluation capability – the expertise, systems and structures to conduct evaluations internally;
- planning to evaluate by embedding evaluation into policies and programs, and co-ordinating evaluation activity;
- evaluating strategically by prioritising and scaling evaluation activity, based on an assessment of the size, risk and complexity associated with a program;
- conducting evaluations to a high standard and from an overall perspective of sustainability i.e. social, economic and environmental; and
- making evaluation count – by communicating results and acting on recommendations.

4.71 Audit sought to identify whether any evaluations had been conducted on the different programs and services.

4.72 With the exception of the Early Intervention Program, there have not been any reviews or evaluations conducted of the early childhood education programs and services that were the focus of this audit. ETD has not sought to identify whether the different programs and services are achieving their objectives, or whether the programs are leading to improved educational outcomes for the participants.

### Early Intervention Programs

4.73 In June 2011 an external review of the Early Intervention Programs was concluded. The review sought to answer the following broad research questions:

- what is the current range and adequacy of the programs;
- how effective are the programs in meeting the needs and improving the long-term outcomes of the children and parents involved in the programs; and
- how might the efficiency, administration and location of the services be improved to provide better outcomes for children, their families and service providers.

4.74 The method used for the review involved:

- the use of two discrete survey instruments, to obtain quantitative and qualitative data from staff and parents/carers of children attending the services; and
- a semi-focused interview structure to obtain further information from staff and other agencies working in conjunction with the programs.

***Early Intervention Programs review findings and recommendations***

- 4.75 The review identified a high degree of parental/carer satisfaction with the services and the quality of support from the staff. The report stated ‘the fact that the programs have a proactive/early intervention focus, with many children making successful transition to mainstream education is highly valued by parents/carers, and is intrinsically rewarding to staff.’
- 4.76 A range of potential improvements to the programs were also identified and the review made 20 recommendations for improvement. Key recommendations included:
- the amalgamation of some of the services with co-located primary schools or Early Childhood Centres;
  - the integration of Early Childhood Intervention Playgroups with CSD’s Child and Family Centres;
  - the temporary closure of some groups/programs due to overall vacancies in the programs;
  - more effective use of Individual Learning Plans for students;
  - more effective processes for transitioning into and out of the program;
  - strengthening staff professional competencies; and
  - addressing fragmentation by establishing more effective communication amongst staff in the program and with Therapy ACT.
- 4.77 Some of the recommendations for improvement have already been implemented by ETD, e.g. amalgamation of services with local schools, while others are in the process of being considered.
- 4.78 Audit notes that while the review was comprehensive it did not seek to identify whether the programs were effective in actually meeting the needs of the community in the delivery of services.
- 4.79 Chapter 5 of this report identifies potential shortcomings in the delivery of the programs, which heightens the risk that parents/carers are not aware of the programs and that the programs are inaccessible to many due to the placement of services around the ACT. It is difficult to reconcile the potential inability of the programs to meet the community’s needs, with evidence indicating that there is capacity in the programs and that particular services should be temporarily shut down due to lack of numbers. The inability of ETD to identify and quantify needs for the programs, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this report, impairs ETD’s ability to establish a strong evidence base for the programs, adequately plan for service delivery and ensure resources are used efficiently.

### Early Childhood Schools

- 4.80 The *ACT Early Childhood Schools Initiative Evaluation Framework (May 2010)* was developed by academic consultants and finalised in May 2010. The framework was designed as a longitudinal evaluation, which was to commence in 2009 and conclude in 2017, involving both a process evaluation (monitoring and evaluating the delivery of programs and services from the schools) and an outcomes evaluation (assessing whether the schools have lead to intended outcomes).
- 4.81 Although the evaluation framework was designed to ‘guide the development of the early childhood schools model’, to date, the evaluation framework has not been implemented by ETD. Nevertheless, ETD has confirmed that it will evaluate the Early Childhood Schools using this framework, following five years of the Early Childhood Schools being in operation. ETD has advised that planning for evaluation would take place in 2013, with a view to undertaking the evaluation in 2014.
- 4.82 Audit considers that it is important to undertake an evaluation of the Early Childhood Schools to identify whether they are a cost-effective method of service delivery for the ACT community. As noted previously, there is no specific targeting of the schools to identified groups within the community, such as children who are socially or economically disadvantaged. There is variability in the nature and scope of services delivered by the schools and they represent an expensive method of service delivery. Without an evaluation it is not possible to determine if these schools offer value for money that justify their comparatively higher costs. When conducting any evaluation, care should be taken to ensure all relevant stakeholders are consulted and can contribute to the evaluation.

### Cost of Early Childhood Schools

- 4.83 Table 4.5a compares the per-student notional income of all four Early Childhood Schools with other ETD primary schools. Other schools for comparison were chosen on the basis that they are P-6 schools (which represent the most common form of public primary school in the ACT) and their location, adjacent to the Early Childhood Schools.

**Table 4.5a: Notional recurrent income per student comparison between Early Childhood Schools and nearest primary school (2009 to 2012)**

	<b>2009 (actual)</b>	<b>2010 (actual)</b>	<b>2011 (actual)</b>	<b>2012 (budget)</b>
Narrabundah ECS	\$15 247	\$14 531	\$16 281	\$18 722
Red Hill Primary	\$8 213	\$8 640	\$9 012	\$9 520
Isabella Plains ECS	\$17 437	\$15 064	\$18 706	\$14 919
Bonython Primary	\$8 700	\$9 176	\$10 274	\$11 101
Southern Cross ECS	\$14 779	\$14 472	\$15 120	\$12 806
Florey Primary	\$9 262	\$9 441	\$10 978	\$11 644
Lyons ECS	\$28 679	\$18 096	\$16 253	\$15 320
Curtin Primary	\$9 310	\$9 996	\$10 449	\$9 588

Source: Audit Office, based on information supplied by ETD

- 4.84 While there is always some reservation in undertaking benchmarking analysis, particularly as there are inherent differences in the schools and the services that are delivered, Table 4.5a shows that the Early Childhood Schools are comparatively more expensive than nearby P - 6 primary schools on a total population per student basis.
- 4.85 ETD disagrees with the approach taken by Audit to compare the costs of the schools. ETD suggests that it is more appropriate to directly compare the per student cost of the Early Childhood Schools with the P – 2 component of the adjacent primary schools. This comparison is presented in Table 4.5b.

**Table 4.5b: Notional recurrent income per student comparison between Early Childhood Schools (P-2) and nearest primary school (P-2) (2009 to 2012)**

	2009 (actual)	2010 (actual)	2011 (actual)	2012 (budget)
Narrabundah ECS	\$15 247	\$14 531	\$16 281	\$18 722
Red Hill Primary	\$10 616	\$11 241	\$11 687	\$12 490
Isabella Plains ECS	\$17 437	\$15 064	\$18 706	\$14 919
Bonython Primary	\$11 741	\$12 407	\$14 570	\$15 379
Southern Cross ECS	\$14 779	\$14 472	\$15 120	\$12 806
Floreay Primary	\$12 414	\$11 778	\$13 879	\$14 857
Lyons ECS	\$28 679	\$18 096	\$16 253	\$15 320
Curtin Primary	\$13 084	\$13 583	\$15 057	\$13 129

Source: Audit Office, based on information supplied by ETD

- 4.86 Audit considers that it is more appropriate to compare the per-student notional recurrent income of the schools on the basis of the total population of the schools as presented in Table 4.5a. This approach is considered appropriate as it recognises the two key models of primary schools in the ACT, the P-2 Early Childhood School model and the P-6 primary school model. The approach suggested by ETD as presented in Table 4.5b does not include the Year 3 to Year 6 component of the selected primary schools, which does not reflect how the schools actually operate.
- 4.87 The need to incur basic administrative and operational costs in the schools, combined with the small size of the schools, means there is a lack of opportunity to achieve efficiencies and economies of scale. Audit notes that the schools have a comparatively small Preschool to Year 2 total capacity (Narrabundah ECS – 176; Isabella Plains – 264; Lyons ECS – 201; and Southern Cross - 201). As the schools cost comparatively more than adjacent primary schools it is important that these schools ensure that their services and programs are actively promoted to those most in need.

### Koori Preschool Programs

- 4.88 ETD has not conducted any reviews or evaluations of the Koori Preschool Programs. Accordingly, ETD cannot demonstrate whether the Koori Preschool Programs are meeting intended objectives and whether they represent a cost-effective means of service delivery.
- 4.89 Audit had the opportunity to meet with some parents/carers of Koori Preschool Program students. Responses on the Koori Preschool Programs were overwhelmingly positive. Parents/carers spoke of the importance of the program in:

- providing an opportunity for the children to become better prepared for mainstream Preschool studies; and
- providing an opportunity for potentially socially isolated parents/carers to meet other parents/carers.

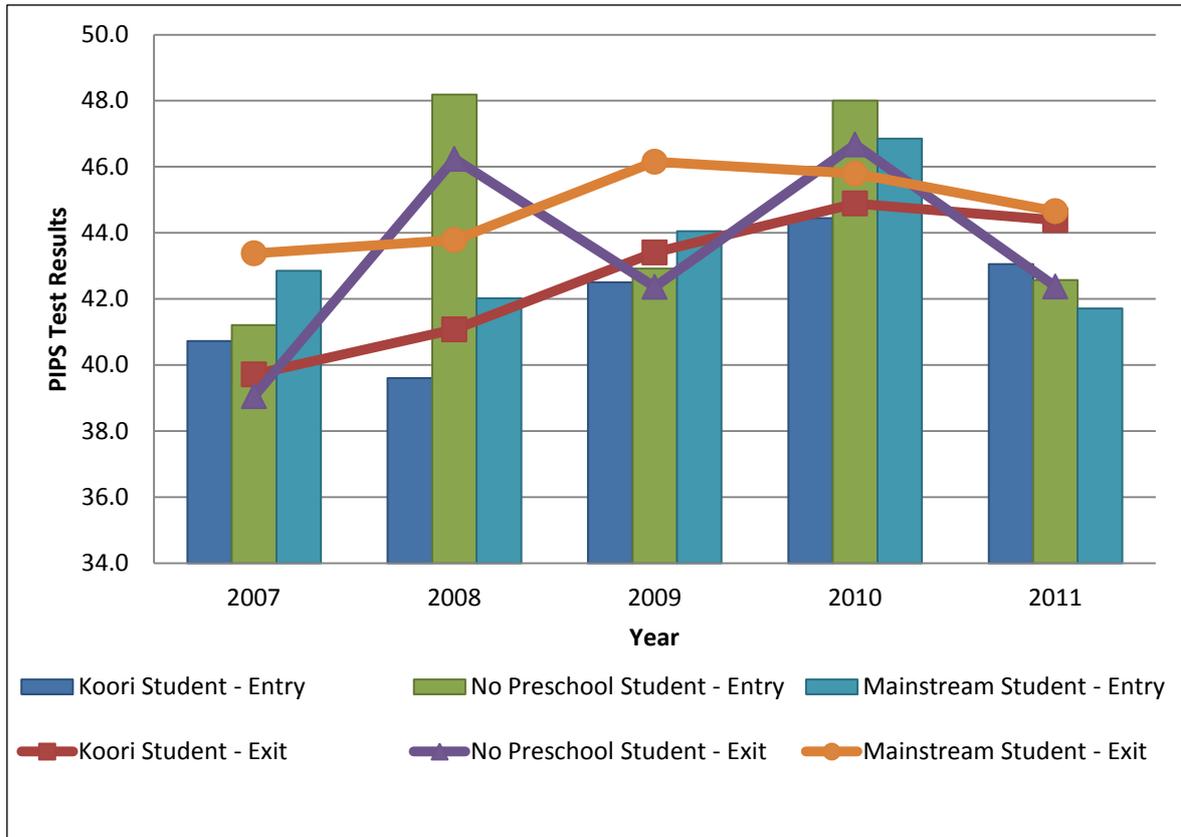
4.90 Parents/carers also identified shortcomings associated with the Koori Preschool Programs, particularly the accessibility of the programs. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.91 A potential indicator of the success or otherwise of the Koori Preschool Programs in delivering services is the educational achievements of Koori Preschool Program graduates. Audit sought to compare Koori Preschool Program graduates' PIPS Kindergarten results with those of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who had not attended an ETD Preschool; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who had attended a mainstream ETD Preschool.

4.92 This analytical approach is comparatively simplistic, as it does not identify a baseline for the students' achievements. That is, on the basis of the available data, it is not possible to determine whether the educational achievements of the students may be attributed to their learning experience or a range of other factors, including their personal and family attributes. Nevertheless, it provides some information to assist the future management and administration of the programs.

**Figure 4.2: PIPS entry and exit results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**



Source: Audit Office, based on PIPS testing results from ETD’s Planning and Performance Branch.

4.93 Figure 4.2 shows that for all years except 2011, graduates of the Koori Preschool Programs achieved lower PIPS entry results than their peers who had either attended a mainstream Preschool or did not attend an ETD Preschool. The graph also shows that there has been significant variability in the testing results of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children over the Kindergarten year, with a number of PIPS exit results apparently lower than the PIPS entry results.

4.94 When conducting any evaluation, care should be taken to ensure all relevant stakeholders are consulted and can contribute to the evaluation. This includes consideration of the effectiveness of partnerships between the Koori Preschool Programs and other stakeholders, including Child and Family Centres and other community organisations.

**Recommendation 6 (Chapter 4)**

ETD should conduct regular evaluations of its early childhood schooling programs and services. The evaluations should seek to examine the extent to which the programs and services are meeting intended objectives and whether they are a cost-effective means of delivering services to the ACT community. As a priority, ETD should evaluate:

- a) the Early Childhood Schools initiative; and
- b) the Koori Preschool Programs.

## 5. MEETING THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

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- 5.1 This chapter discusses ETD's management and administrative arrangements to meet the needs of the community in delivering its early childhood schooling services. It focuses on the capacity and accessibility of ETD's services to meet the community's needs.

### SUMMARY

#### Conclusion

There are a number of significant shortcomings in the delivery of the early childhood education programs and services, which indicate that the programs are not meeting the community's needs. Policy and administrative shortcomings in the programs' service delivery, including potential barriers in the programs' accessibility to their target groups, should be recognised and addressed by ETD as a matter of priority.

#### Key findings

- A benefit of the Early Childhood Schools is said to be the 'birth to eight' model of service delivery and that children will benefit from attending a single establishment that offers an integrated early childhood schooling experience. In pursuing this model, childcare fees payable to the private operator of childcare services in the Early Childhood Schools presents a potential barrier to socially or economically disadvantaged children and their families.
- The Early Childhood Schools are not subject to the ETD's Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) policy and therefore there is no barrier to them assisting children from socially or economically disadvantaged families who may not be in the immediate vicinity.
- Children attending the childcare component of the school are not guaranteed a place in the school from Preschool to Year 2. This impairs the delivery of the 'birth to eight' model of service delivery which is one of the key reasons for establishing the schools.
- The lack of dedicated health facilities in the Lyons and Isabella Plains Early Childhood Schools, as well as the future Franklin Early Childhood School, impairs the achievement of the schools' objective to integrate health services within its education, family and community services.
- Governance and administrative arrangements in the Early Childhood Schools have presented difficulties to effective management and communication. This has primarily derived from the involvement of the private childcare operator in each of the schools. Early Childhood School principals are responsible for the management of the school as a whole, but have found it

difficult to instruct local childcare staff, who necessarily have responsibilities to their employer. Revised governance arrangements have been incorporated in most recent contractual arrangements, which ETD expects to address this particular issue.

- The Koori Preschool Programs are being accessed by a small proportion of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the ACT. This may be due to a range of reasons, including parents/carers' choices and preferences. However, there is an opportunity to improve the promotion and targeting of the programs by improving the targeting and marketing of the program to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working in the programs and developing better linkages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations.
- There is conflicting information as to whether the Early Intervention Programs are meeting the needs of the ACT community. Enrolments in the programs have been declining and there is evidence to suggest that the programs have excess capacity, which may warrant the closure of some services. Alternatively, there is strong evidence to suggest that the programs are inaccessible to some parents/carers and that there is an unmet need in the community for the programs. Barriers to accessing the programs are presented by the current location of the services, which has led to a lack of services in significant areas of the ACT (including Gungahlin, the inner north and inner south). The lack of transport options for parents/carers was raised as a barrier to accessing these services.
- The uneven placement of the Early Intervention Programs throughout the ACT is primarily because the programs are only delivered from schools where there is physical capacity. Mainstream Preschool and schooling classes take priority over the Early Intervention Programs. This has led to Early Intervention Program services being regularly shifted around schools to accommodate the needs of mainstream schooling classes.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOLS

5.2 Part of the rationale in establishing the Early Childhood Schools, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this report, was the need to address the particular challenges faced by children who are socially or economically disadvantaged. As previously mentioned, ETD has not sought to identify socially or economically disadvantaged families and their children for potential targeting for enrolment at the schools.

5.3 The *ACT Early Childhood Schools Initiative Evaluation Framework (May 2010)* identifies a range of children who may be identified as vulnerable and who could benefit most from the schools. The framework identifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from families who are financially poor, children

who are culturally and linguistically diverse (especially those who are recently arrived refugees), children who suffer trauma including parental incapacity (such as imprisonment, mental health and substance use problems) and children who are in contact with child protection and/or out of home care systems.

- 5.4 In the course of discussions with stakeholders, Audit became aware that there are issues regarding the capacity and accessibility of the Early Childhood Schools to meet the demands of the ACT community, specifically the demands of socially or economically disadvantaged children and their families.

### Accessibility

- 5.5 There are four Early Childhood Schools in the ACT. The Early Childhood Schools were established in 2009 and were located in areas where there was a perceived need and demand for the integrated service delivery model (Narrabundah, Isabella Plains, Lyons and Scullin). A fifth Early Childhood School will be opened in Franklin in 2013.
- 5.6 Audit considers that the Early Childhood Schools have reasonable geographic coverage across the main areas of Canberra, including the growth area of Gungahlin.

### Accessibility to childcare

- 5.7 A benefit of the Early Childhood Schools is said to be the 'birth to eight' model of service delivery. That is, the model is premised on the idea that children will benefit from attending a single establishment that offers an integrated early childhood schooling experience (including health and community, childcare and schooling services).
- 5.8 Childcare services at the Early Childhood Schools are delivered by a private operator and parents/carers must pay for these services. Audit was advised that this presents a potential barrier to economically disadvantaged families, who may not be able to afford the childcare fees. Despite Commonwealth benefits such as the Childcare Benefit and the Childcare Rebate the childcare costs may be prohibitive for economically disadvantaged families.
- 5.9 ETD does not maintain data on the number of socially or economically disadvantaged families and their children (as potential enrolments in the Early Childhood Schools) and it is currently not possible to identify the extent to which they are accessing childcare services. However, the Productivity Commission's annual ROGS report identifies a number of additional needs groups within the community and the extent to which they are accessing childcare services, as outlined in Table 5.1. There is a high degree of alignment between the Productivity Commission's categories and the *ACT Early Childhood Schools Initiative Evaluation Framework's (May 2010)* identification of children who may be identified as vulnerable and who could benefit most from the schools (refer to paragraph 5.3).

**Table 5.1: Proportion of ACT children aged birth-12 from groups with additional needs attending approved childcare services (2010)**

<b>Additional needs group</b>	<b>In child care services (percent)</b>	<b>In the community (percent)</b>
LBOTE	13.1	16.2
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	0.9	2.4
Low income families	8.8	11.5
Disability	1.9	8.3

Source: Audit Office, based on Report on Government Services 2012, Table 3.4

- 5.10 Table 5.1 shows that children from groups with additional needs are, on the whole, attending childcare services at a disproportionately lower rate than other children in the community.
- 5.11 ETD does not have strategies to address this potential cost barrier to socially or economically disadvantaged families and their children. ETD advised that an annual sum of money (\$80 000) had been allocated as emergency funds to assist vulnerable families and their children. However, there is no policy or administrative guidance on how this money should be used and the funds have only been accessed on a small number of occasions. Given this it is important that this potential barrier be removed as a priority.
- 5.12 Audit notes that CSD also has funds available to assist families to access early childhood education and care services. The West Belconnen Child and Family Centre have \$50 000 allocated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to access early childhood education and care services. \$30 000 is also available for vulnerable or at risk families to access early childhood education and care services. This funding is for emergency situations whereby families can access up to 100 hours of long day care.

### **Early childhood school services**

- 5.13 Services delivered at the Early Childhood Schools vary between schools. This is primarily due to the physical restrictions in the schools and the different community partnerships that have been developed.
- 5.14 Community programs such as playgroups, parents groups and community gatherings are each offered at all of the Early Childhood Schools. Table 5.2 shows the programs that are offered by each of the schools.

**Table 5.2: Community Programs offered by the Early Childhood Schools**

	Lyons	Narrabundah	Southern Cross	Isabella Plains
<b>Playgroups</b>				
Paint and Play	✓	✓	✓	✓
Moove and Groove		✓	✓	✓
Story Time		✓		
Tiger Cubs' Playgroup		✓		
Rhyming Connections			✓	
Music Gems Playgroup				✓
<b>Parent Groups (Education and Social)</b>				
Craft and Laugh				✓
Creative Mamas	✓			
Promoting Positive Parenting	✓			
Meet and Make			✓	
Mums of young bubs				✓
Parent Education				✓
<b>Literacy and Numeracy</b>				
Family Library Time	✓			
Maths Evening	✓			
Literacy Learning	✓			
<b>Community Gatherings</b>				
Community Meals	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Audit Office, based on ETD information

- 5.15 Audit identified that the Lyons and Isabella Plains Early Childhood Schools do not have dedicated health facilities. Furthermore, Audit was also advised that health facilities are not being planned for the future Franklin Early Childhood School. By way of contrast, the Narrabundah and Southern Cross schools have dedicated health rooms that facilitate the delivery of health services, such as visits from MACH nurses and midwifery programs. Audit was advised that the lack of community health facilities in the Lyons and Isabella Plains schools has necessarily impacted the range of services that have been delivered at these schools, which impairs the achievement of the Early Childhood Schools' goal to provide integrated early childhood services from birth to eight.

### **Recommendation 7 (Chapter 5)**

ETD should:

- a) review the model of fee subsidy used to support socially or economically disadvantaged families access to the Early Childhood Schools; and
- b) review the provision of health services in the Early Childhood Schools, including the extent to which the lack of dedicated health facilities represents a barrier to effective service provision.

ETD should develop a policy response to address their findings.

### **Capacity**

- 5.16 Enrolments in the Early Childhood Schools, as would be expected, were initially low but have increased since their opening in 2009 (refer to Appendix B). ETD advised that, as the schools and their services have become more well-known throughout the ACT community, they are expected to reach capacity soon.
- 5.17 Two aspects of the Early Childhood Schools are likely to cause capacity problems in the future and potential shortcomings in service delivery.
- 5.18 One aspect of the Early Childhood Schools is that they are not subject to the ETD's Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) policy, which ordinarily applies to ETD's schools. Under the PEA policy, parents/carers with children in a school's PEA are guaranteed a place in the school. Without a designated PEA, the Early Childhood Schools have been accepting enrolments from parents/carers throughout the ACT (and New South Wales).
- 5.19 As mentioned in paragraph 4.36 the schools were located in areas of the ACT where there was a perceived need for the integrated service delivery model (although no attempt was being made to identify socially or economically disadvantaged families and their children for enrolment). By not being subject to the PEA policy (and not targeting socially or economically disadvantaged families) there is a risk that ongoing enrolments in the schools will contribute to the schools being 'schools of choice' for the broader ACT community.
- 5.20 A second aspect of the Early Childhood Schools is that children attending childcare in the schools are not guaranteed a place in Preschool. Parents/carers must separately enrol their children in their Preschool year. This presents a risk to the objectives that are sought from the schools, which were intended to provide integrated services to children from birth to eight. While there is no evidence to indicate that this has caused any problems to date, it may become problematic in the future as the expected growth in the schools' enrolments continues.

**Recommendation 8 (Chapter 5)**

ETD should develop administrative and procedural guidance for its Early Childhood Schools to ensure that the birth to eight 'wraparound' services model is realised for socially or economically disadvantaged families and children. Specifically an enrolments policy should be developed which:

- a) recognises the need to deliver services to socially or economically disadvantaged families and children; and
- b) addresses the issue of transition of children from childcare to Preschool to Year 2 years.

**Governance arrangements within the Early Childhood Schools**

5.21 The Early Childhood Schools are a new model for service delivery for early childhood schooling in the ACT that is characterised by:

- multiple ACT Government agencies being involved in programs and services from the schools including ETD, CSD and Health Directorate; and
- the involvement of a private operator for the early childhood education and care component of the schools.

5.22 This is an innovative approach to service delivery, but also one that presents risks if governance and administrative arrangements are not well established and understood by the different stakeholders. During audit fieldwork, Audit became aware of shortcomings in the governance and administrative arrangements, which have impaired the effective administration and delivery of services at the schools.

5.23 Audit notes that an interdepartmental steering committee was initially set up to guide the establishment of the four Early Childhood Schools. However, this group was disbanded in 2010 and no local governance mechanisms were established to foster ongoing integrated ACT Government service delivery within each of the schools. ACT Government stakeholders advise that there are system and operational issues that currently impact on planning for, and the delivery of, services in the schools. Since the disbanding of the interdepartmental steering committee ACT Government agencies advise that there have been limited strategic mechanisms for resolution of these issues.

5.24 Audit notes that work is currently underway to establish a high-level Memorandum of Understanding to clarify cross-directorate arrangements for the Early Childhood Schools, as well as individual service level agreements between agencies for specific services within individual Early Childhood Schools. Audit recognises that these initiatives are likely to improve inter-agency collaboration within the Early Childhood Schools.

***Governance arrangements associated with the private early childhood education and care operator(s)***

- 5.25 As of 2012, multiple private operators have been contracted to provide childcare services at the four Early Childhood Schools. Current contractual arrangements for the private operators of childcare services are:
- Narrabundah – Communities@Work (since 2011);
  - Isabella Plains – Communities@Work (since 2012);
  - Lyons – Woden Community Service (since 2011); and
  - Southern Cross – Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn (since 2012).
- 5.26 At the schools' opening in 2009, The Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland (C&K) was contracted to provide childcare services at all four sites.
- 5.27 At present, the ETD Corporate Services Division manages the contract(s) with the private childcare operators. There is benefit in having a central coordination point for the management of these contracts, given the devolution of the Early Childhood Schools initiative to the school networks and the fact that the schools are currently located across three different school networks under three separate Network Leaders. However, ETD's Corporate Services Division is not directly involved in education service delivery and it may be more beneficial for the contracts to be managed by ETD staff directly involved in the provision of education service delivery in the Early Childhood Schools.
- 5.28 Some features of the contractual arrangements for the delivery of childcare in these schools are presented in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3: Contractual agreements between Early Childhood Schools and childcare operators**

Period	Provider	Particulars
<b>Narrabundah Early Childhood School</b>		
2009-10	The Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland	Contract included one option for an additional two-year term.
2010-11	The Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland	One year of the additional two-year term option was exercised. (No agreement for the exercise of the additional term was signed).
2011-14	Communities@Work	No options for additional terms.
<b>Isabella Plains Early Childhood School</b>		
2009-10	The Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland	Contract included one option for an additional two-year term.
2010-12	The Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland	The additional two-year term option was exercised. (An agreement for the second year of the option was prepared, but not signed by the parties).
2012-17	Communities@Work	Contract includes options for two additional three-year terms.
<b>Lyons Early Childhood School</b>		
2009-10	The Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland	Contract included one option for an additional two-year term.
2010-11	The Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland	One year of the additional two-year term option was exercised. (No agreement for the exercise of the additional term was signed).
2011-13	Woden Community Service Pty Ltd	No options for further terms.
<b>Southern Cross Early Childhood School</b>		
2009-10	The Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland	Contract included one option for an additional two-year term.
2011-12	The Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland	One year of the additional two-year term option was exercised. (No agreement for the exercise of the additional term was signed).
2012-17	Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn	Contract includes options for two additional three-year terms.

Source: Audit Office, based on licence agreements provided by ETD

- 5.29 Table 5.3 shows that there was inadequate documentation for the exercise of many of the additional options in the original contracts, i.e. there was no signed contractual documents for the exercise of the contractual options. This is a shortcoming in contract management and administration as it places at risk ETD's capacity to manage service provider performance.
- 5.30 The contracts provide the private operator with a licence to operate a childcare centre from the Early Childhood School for an annual licence fee. The private operator must meet ongoing service standards and requirements, which are outlined in the contract.
- 5.31 These arrangements have lead to some practical difficulties in administrative arrangements at the schools. An issue for consideration is that the Early Childhood School principals are responsible for the operation of the school as a whole, but have limited authority over the operation of the childcare centre on site.
- 5.32 Issues have occurred with respect to:
- the principals' inability to compel or instruct the local Child Care Manager (employed by the private operator) on some management and administrative matters, largely deriving from the Child Care Manager's dual reporting role to the private operator's management and the Early Childhood School principal; and
  - the principals' inability to access key information and records (financial or otherwise) maintained by the private operator.
- 5.33 Initial contracts with the private operators did not provide satisfactory policy and procedural guidance or options for managing these issues.
- 5.34 The most recent contracts with the private operators (Communities@Work – Isabella Plains and Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn – Southern Cross) specifically provide the following governance arrangements:
- the appointment of an Integration Steering Committee 'to develop, implement and monitor policies and practices to support the operation of a birth-eight years site and to allow seamless transition from childcare to school'. The committee is to include the Principal, the Childcare Manager (or other representative) and a community representative; and
  - the requirement for the Principal to be consulted by (and provide support to) the private operator in relation to:
    - curriculum pedagogy and assessment;
    - policy development for the childcare services (to ensure consistency of practice with the school);
    - complaints handling;
    - senior staff selection;

- personnel management;
- National Quality Standards assessments;
- facility management; and
- executive team meetings.

5.35 These revised arrangements are a direct response to perceived shortcomings in the earlier contractual arrangements. ETD is currently considering options to incorporate these governance arrangements into the pre-existing contracts.

### **KOORI PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS**

5.36 There is evidence to indicate that ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are, on average, achieving lower early childhood schooling outcomes than their peers. It is therefore important for ETD to ensure that the Koori Preschool Programs are meeting the needs of ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

5.37 The Koori Preschool Programs are offered in five locations in the ACT (refer to Appendix C). Eligible children may attend for up to nine hours per week.

### **Accessibility**

5.38 As discussed in paragraph 3.19 of the report, ETD is not undertaking sufficient and rigorous analysis to identify and quantify the potential needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for the Koori Preschool Programs.

5.39 Audit was advised by ETD that it is problematic to do so due to a number of factors, including:

- the transient nature of some of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community; and
- historical barriers to engaging with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

5.40 Audit sought to identify the extent to which Koori Preschool Program enrolments reflected the potential number of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the community. In doing so, Audit appreciated the apparent difficulty in obtaining accurate and reliable population data. Overall limitations in the population data of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have been highlighted by the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, whose 2010 Annual Report specifically recommended that ACT Government agencies work to improve the collection and management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data.

5.41 The target group for Koori Preschool Programs are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged three to five. There is no readily available data on the

number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in this age group. There is, however, 2008 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data which estimated that the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the birth to 3 years old group was 500. Most recent ABS data from 2011 estimated that the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the birth to 4 years old group was 304.

5.42 Table 5.4 presents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in the Koori Preschool Programs and Mainstream Preschools.

**Table 5.4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in ACT Government Preschool Programs**

	Mainstream Preschool	Koori Preschool
2009	174	68
2010	191	60
2011	199	70

Source: Audit Office, based on ETD School Census (2009 to 2011) and ABS Publications.

5.43 Mainstream Preschool enrolment figures in Table 5.4 are from ETD school censuses. Audit was advised by ETD that this figure is likely to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are also enrolled in the Koori Preschool Programs. The nature of ETD's data management and information systems means it is problematic and time-consuming to identify the number of children attending more than one program, although improvements in data collection and information management are expected to address this problem in the future.

5.44 The data suggests that Koori Preschool Program services are not being taken up by all parents/carers of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This is reinforced by a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community group, which asserts that there are 81 four year olds and 87 five year olds in the vulnerable families that it is providing services to, who may benefit from attending the program.

5.45 Non-enrolment of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Koori Preschool Programs may be due to a range of different reasons, including:

- parents/carers' choices not to enrol their children in the program, as the children are enrolled in alternative early childhood education and care services or mainstream Preschool services;
- shortcomings in the information-provision and advertising of the program; and
- shortcomings in the placement and accessibility of the program, which makes it difficult for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents to arrange attendance.

- 5.46 With respect to the provision of information and the placement and accessibility of services, staff and stakeholders proposed the following potential improvements to the program:
- improve the targeting and marketing of the program to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through respected community representatives and leaders who can directly engage with the community;
  - increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working in the programs. At present there is only one Aboriginal teacher's aide involved in the program; and
  - develop better linkages with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations. There are no arrangements in place whereby Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations are regularly consulted to identify potential eligible children for enrolment.
- 5.47 The delivery of the Koori Preschool Programs for nine hours per week may also not be convenient for parents/carers. The nine hours of tuition is typically provided in two blocks of 4.5 hours over two days. This is the maximum number of hours that a teacher may work without a scheduled break. It may be inconvenient for a parent/carer to arrange for their child to be collected during the day and this may be a barrier to enrolment in the Koori Preschool Programs.

#### **Recommendation 9 (Chapter 5)**

ETD should identify opportunities to extend the reach of the Koori Preschool Programs to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. In doing so, ETD should seek to:

- a) develop better linkages with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, government agencies and community organisations, in order to generate referrals and enrolments in the programs; and
- b) engage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to work in the programs.

## **EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**

- 5.49 Early Intervention Programs are offered at several locations in the ACT (refer to Appendix D).
- 5.50 As mentioned in section 3.17 of the report, ETD is not undertaking any research or analysis to identify the potential number of eligible children for enrolment in the Early Intervention Programs. Accordingly, ETD is unable to demonstrate whether it is meeting the community's needs.
- 5.51 The following sections highlight that there is conflicting information with respect to the capacity and accessibility of the Early Intervention Programs to meet the ACT community's needs.

### **Capacity**

- 5.52 As shown in Table 4.1 of this report, the Early Intervention Programs did not meet targets for expected services in the 2009-10 and 2010-11 for ETD Statements of Performance. In 2009-10 ETD reported that 430 children received services against a target of 450, while in 2010-11 392 students received services against a target 450.
- 5.53 A June 2011 review of the Early Intervention Programs identified that there was an excess capacity of 77 places in the programs at that time. A recommendation was made to temporarily close services until enrolment numbers had increased. Subsequently, ETD cut back on its number of services (specifically the Early Intervention Unit offerings in Maribyrnong and Namadji).
- 5.54 This analysis suggests that the programs have excess capacity and there is an opportunity to review the extent of services and places that are offered under the program.

### **Accessibility**

- 5.55 Table 5.5 gives the current (2012) location of services delivered under the Early Intervention Programs.

**Table 5.5: Location of Early Intervention Program services in 2012**

North Canberra	South Canberra	Gungahlin
Early Childhood Intervention Unit		
Maribyrnong (Kaleen)	Namadgi (Kambah)	Harrison
Melba	Chisholm	
Weetangera	Waramanga	
Autism Intervention Unit		
Giralang	Monash	
Melba	Namadgi (Kambah)	
Language Intervention Unit		
	Curtin	
Early Childhood Intervention Playgroups		
Maribyrnong (Kaleen)	Namadgi (Kambah)	
	Chisholm	

Source: Audit Office, based on ETD information

5.56 Key issues for recognition from Table 5.5 are:

- there are very few services delivered in Gungahlin, with only two classes of Early Childhood Intervention Units (ECIUs) delivered in Harrison;
- Early Childhood Intervention Playgroups are only located in three places in the ACT. Classes are offered at Maribyrnong Primary School (Kaleen) and classes are offered in Tuggeranong at Namadji School and Chisholm Primary School; and
- the Language Intervention Unit only has two classes, which are available at the Curtin Primary School.

5.57 Many areas of Canberra are not well-served by the Early Intervention Program, including the inner north and inner south.

5.58 The current location of the Early Intervention Programs means that there is a high risk that the programs are inaccessible to some parents/carers and the ACT community's needs are not being met. Further, parents/carers that have the means to do so are travelling some distance to enable their children to attend the programs. In this respect, Audit was advised by ETD that approximately 20 to 30 families in Gungahlin are accessing services elsewhere.

5.59 The Early Intervention Programs are primarily delivered from schools and areas where there is physical capacity. Mainstream Preschool and schooling classes take priority over the Early Intervention Program services during ETD's planning processes. The strong demand for mainstream schooling services in Gungahlin is the primary reason why there is a lack of Early Intervention Program services in

the area. The priority of mainstream schooling classes also means that Early Intervention Program services are regularly moved between schools, depending on where there is physical capacity. The services are shifted in response to physical space constraints and not because of the local community's needs.

5.60 Given the location of the services, difficulties associated with transport are considered to be a barrier to parents/carers accessing the program and services. Audit was advised by ETD that transport difficulties were cited as a reason for non enrolment and non attendance in the program by some parents/carers of children who had been offered places.

5.61 To address this ETD provides taxi vouchers to eligible parents/carers who have transport difficulty. However, these are only offered for a return trip. Children need to be accompanied by a parent/carer during travel and this is problematic if:

- the parent/carer has responsibility for other children. If the other children are attending care or schooling at other sites, it is difficult to arrange transport for all children simultaneously. Alternatively if the parent/carer needs to supervise the other children it is difficult to arrange taxis with the requisite number of infant seats; and
- the parent/carer has other responsibilities which prevents them from staying with the child for the duration of the program / service in order to accompany them on the return trip.

5.62 Audit was advised by ETD staff of similar services in the ACT, whereby transport is provided community groups/volunteer drivers for children whose parents have difficulty in arranging transport.

### ***Reconciling capacity and accessibility issues***

5.63 Information regarding the capacity and accessibility of the Early Intervention Programs to meet the needs of the ACT community is contradictory.

5.64 Audit was advised by some ETD stakeholders that children who are likely to have benefited from attending an Early Intervention Program service are commencing schooling in Kindergarten without having attended the program. However, the lack of research and analysis by ETD to identify the potential number of children eligible for enrolment means that ETD cannot identify the extent to which the program is, or is not, meeting the needs of the ACT community.

5.65 Recommendation 2 of this report seeks to address this shortcoming by ensuring that planning for the Early Intervention Programs (along with other programs and services) is included in the ACT Public School Enrolments Projections document and that all planning is based on a rigorous identification and quantification of the community's needs.

**Recommendation 10 (Chapter 5)**

Following the implementation of Recommendation 2, which addresses ETD's planning processes for its early childhood schooling programs and services, ETD should:

- a) review the current policy and management arrangements for the placement of its Early Intervention Program services and ensure that where possible Early Intervention Program services are placed in areas where there is a clearly identified and quantified need; and
- b) review the feasibility of providing transport services to families of children who need to attend the programs and use the services.

**PRESCHOOL EARLY ENTRY PROGRAMS**

- 5.66 Early entry to Preschool may be offered to children on the basis of a number of eligibility criteria, including:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander;
  - English as an additional language or dialect;
  - hearing and vision impaired;
  - gifted and talented; and
  - mobility (i.e. the child's parents/carers may have recently moved to the ACT and, due to the child's educational experience in another jurisdiction, the child may be at an educational disadvantage if they were not enrolled in Preschool).
- 5.67 At present, ETD is unable to accurately report on the number of children who are enrolled in Preschool on an early entry basis, due to a lack of reliable data. This is primarily due to the devolved administration of the Preschool Early Entry Programs to the schools. Applications and enrolments for most of the Preschool Early Entry Programs are currently managed by the schools and there is no central oversight, monitoring or reporting. Accordingly, ETD is unable to demonstrate whether the Preschool Early Entry Programs are meeting the needs of the community and being delivered to children who could benefit from the services.
- 5.68 An exception to devolved administration relates to gifted and talented and mobility early entry programs, which is managed by the Early Childhood Education section within the Learning and Teaching Branch. Up to 2009, the Early Childhood Education section administered all applications and enrolments for Preschool early entry, which means that there is accurate data on all early entry placements for 2009.

**Accessibility and Capacity**

5.69 Audit sought to identify the extent to which Preschool Early Entry Programs were meeting the needs of the ACT community. In doing so Audit sought to compare the number of enrolments and the number of applications.

5.70 Table 5.6 compares enrolment and application data, where available.

**Table 5.6: Number of applications and enrolments in Early Entry Programs**

	2009		2010		2011	
	Applications	Enrolments	Applications	Enrolments	Applications	Enrolments
Gifted and Talented	40	22	39	19	36	9
Mobility	39	34	47	42	40	33
EALD	77	67	No data	66	No data	61
Hearing and Vision	1	1	0	0	0	0
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	25	24	No data	15	No data	10
Other	No data	No data	No data	No data	2	2

Source: Audit Office, based on enrolment data provided by ETD's Learning and Teaching Branch.

5.71 Table 5.6 shows that no data is readily available with respect to the number of LBOTE, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and hearing and vision impaired children who are accessing the program.

5.72 Audit suggests that comprehensive, reliable data on the number of Preschool early entry applications and enrolments would facilitate more effective service delivery. It would provide a basis on which ETD could better understand whether it is meeting the needs of the community, and would provide ETD with a stronger basis on which to plan for the program and its future delivery.

**Recommendation 11 (Chapter 5)**

ETD should ensure that accurate data on the number of applications and enrolments for the Preschool Early Entry Programs is maintained, monitored and reported against, to assist with program management and service delivery.

# APPENDIX A: AUDIT CRITERIA, APPROACH AND METHOD

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## AUDIT OBJECTIVE

The objective of this audit was to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on the administrative effectiveness of Education and Training Directorate's delivery of early childhood schooling.

## AUDIT CRITERIA

In determining whether ETD is delivering effective early childhood schooling services key considerations and criteria for the audit are:

### **1. Early childhood schooling services are well planned**

- there is appropriate research and analysis to determine needs and priorities for early childhood schooling services across the ACT
- there is effective stakeholder consultation to determine needs and priorities for early childhood schooling services across the ACT
- ETD planning has identified target groups, needs and priorities for the delivery of early childhood schooling services

### **2. Early childhood schooling services are well managed**

- there are appropriate governance and administrative arrangements within ETD to manage the delivery of early childhood schooling services
- there are appropriate policies and procedures in place to facilitate the delivery of early childhood schooling services
- there is appropriate monitoring, review and evaluation of early childhood schooling services

### **3. Early childhood schooling services are accessed by those children in need or that require the services**

- there is sufficient capacity of early childhood schooling services to meet demand (needs and priorities)
- there is sufficient "accessibility" coverage of early childhood schooling services across Canberra
- needs and priorities for early childhood schooling services are recognised and addressed through specific targeting of services
- real or perceived barriers to early childhood schooling services are recognised and managed

## AUDIT APPROACH AND METHOD

The performance audit was conducted under the authority of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*, and in accordance with the principles, procedures, and guidance contained in Australian Auditing Standards relevant to performance auditing. These standards prescribe the minimum standards of professional audit work expected of performance auditors. Of particular relevance is the professional standard on assurance engagements - *ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements*.

The audit approach and methodology consisted of:

- interviews and discussions with ETD executives, program managers and administrators, principals and teachers;
- a review of program documentation, including planning and strategy documents, governance and accountability documents, related policies and procedures, research reports and other relevant documentation;
- consultation with representative stakeholder groups with involvement in early childhood schooling services; and
- consultation with representatives from other ACT Government agencies, including CSD and Health Directorate.

## APPENDIX B: EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOLS

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### BACKGROUND

In 2008, the ACT Government developed the *Early Childhood Schools Framework* (the framework). The framework 'sets out the ACT Government's vision for a future for children and families that will enhance our community and make Canberra an even better place in which to live and grow.'

The key feature of the framework was the introduction of four new early childhood schools within the ACT. The Southern Cross, Isabella Plains and Narrabundah Early Childhood Schools were opened in September 2009 and the Lyons Early Childhood School was opened in 2010. An Early Childhood School is planned for Franklin in 2013.

A fifth school which was already operating, the O'Connor Cooperative School, is sometimes recognised as an early childhood school. The O'Connor Cooperative School does not offer early childhood education and care services at its site. The O'Connor Cooperative School was not considered in the course of audit fieldwork.

The framework states:

these schools will develop as early learning and development centres. They will become regional hubs, providing integrated services for children (birth to 8 years) and their families. In addition to Preschool to Year 2 classes, these services could include child care, family support services and other services that support children's learning, health and well-being.

The framework is premised on the concept that 'across Australia and internationally, schools are recognised as effective centres for integrated services for children and families...an integrated system built around a school helps meet the needs of all children and all families in a supportive non-judgemental and community-driven way.'

The framework also notes that 'each early childhood school will be unique'. The framework is intended to provide the flexibility for each of the early childhood schools to 'develop early learning and development services in ways that are responsive to the needs of its community. Each community will identify the services that best serve its region and will develop an action plan for the successful operation of each centre.'

### ***Goals of the Early Childhood Schools***

The Early Childhood Schools are intended to contribute to the goals of the *School Excellence Initiative*, the *ACT Children's Plan* and the *Canberra Social Plan (Building our Community)*. In the best interests of the child, the schools will support overarching outcomes of:

- providing excellent schooling;
- strengthening families; and

- building communities.

The framework also identifies that the early childhood schools will provide educational programs and services that:

- promote children's early learning and strengthen their progress;
- improve transitions for children between home, early childhood settings and schooling;
- support children's health and well-being;
- meet the needs of their communities;
- help build strong families and communities;
- involve families and communities in genuine partnerships;
- use interagency approaches to link services for children and families;
- provide a valuable research base that will help improve early childhood schooling across the ACT public school system; and
- 'provide for and promote the care, protection and wellbeing of young children in a way that recognises their right to grow in a safe and stable environment and that takes into account the responsibilities of parents and other for them' (Children and Young People Act 1999).

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOL ENROLMENTS**

Table B.1 shows the number of children enrolled in the Early Childhood Schools since their implementation in 2009.

**Table B.1: Early Childhood School Enrolments 2009 to 2011**

	Narrabundah	Lyons	Southern Cross	Isabella Plains
<b>2009</b>				
Preschool	59	32	49	61
Kindergarten	10	6	18	18
Year 1	4	-	13	5
Year 2	4	-	7	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>2010</b>				
Preschool	69	53	68	76
Kindergarten	20	10	25	33
Year 1	14	6	11	17
Year 2	5	1	10	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>2011</b>				
Preschool	65	48	81	66
Kindergarten	25	38	41	45
Year 1	17	8	19	22
Year 2	14	10	6	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>148</b>

Source: Audit Office, based on ACT School Census (August 2009, August 2010, August 2011)



## APPENDIX C: KOORI PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

### BACKGROUND

Koori Preschool Programs provide an early childhood schooling program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged three to five years. Children under the age of three may attend but must be accompanied by a parent or adult carer.

Within a developmentally appropriate, play based program staff plan programs to support children across all areas of development. The program focuses on the development of Standard Australian English literacy and numeracy skills and children's capacity to engage with school. Children may attend the Koori Preschool Program in addition to attending any Preschool for which they are eligible.

Koori Preschool Programs are located in:

- Holt – Kingsford Smith Early Childhood School;
- Ngunnawal – Ngunnawal Primary School;
- Richardson – Richardson Primary School;
- Narrabundah – Narrabundah Early Childhood School; and
- Wanniasa – Wanniasa Primary School.

### KOORI PRESCHOOL PROGRAM ENROLMENTS

Table C.1 shows the number of children enrolled in the Koori Preschool Programs since 2009.

**Table C.1: Koori Preschool Program Enrolments**

	2009	2010	2011
Narrabundah	17	16	10
Holt	7	7	7
Wanniasa	14	15	20
Calwell	12	9	
Richardson			20
Ngunnawal	18	13	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: Audit Office, based on Education and Training Directorate ACT School Census (2009 to 2011)



# APPENDIX D: EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

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## BACKGROUND

Early Intervention Program services are available to eligible children aged two years to school entry who have, or are at risk of having:

- delays in development;
- a disability;
- at risk from social or environmental factors;
- severe communication and social difficulties; and/or
- multiple disabilities.

Early Intervention Program services focus on learning through play, participation, exploration and experimentation. Within a developmentally appropriate, play based program, staff plan programs to support children across all areas of development. Specific Early Intervention Program services include:

### *Early Intervention Playgroups (EIP)*

Children aged eighteen months to three years are eligible to attend EIPs if they have, or are at risk of having:

- severe communication and social difficulties;
- multiple disabilities;
- significant developmental delay; and/or
- significant physical disabilities.

Children referred to a general Early Intervention Playgroup attend one two-hour session per week, with group size limited to six children. Children referred to the Communication and Social Awareness Playgroup attend two sessions for a total 3.5 hours per week, with group size limited to six children.

### *Early Intervention Units (EIU)*

EIUs provide an early intervention program for children aged three to school entry who have, or are at risk of having:

- delays in development;
- a disability;
- at risk from social or environmental factors;
- severe communication and social difficulties; and/or
- multiple disabilities.

Children attend two sessions for a total of five hours per week. EIUs operate with a maximum of 12 in a group with two staff members.

**Language Intervention Unit (LIU)**

The LIU provides an early intervention program for children aged three to school age with language/speech disorders where a severe delay, in the expressive and receptive language areas (not articulation), has been diagnosed by a speech pathologist.

Children attend one four hour session per week. The LIU operates with a maximum of twelve children in a group with two staff members.

**Autism Intervention Unit (AIU)**

AIUs provide an early intervention program for children who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Children attend two four hour sessions per week. AIUs operate with a maximum of four children in a group with two staff members.

**EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM ENROLMENTS**

Table D.1 shows the number of children enrolled in the Early Intervention Programs since 2009.

**Table D.1: Early Intervention Program Enrolments**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Autism Intervention Unit	31	28	29
Early Intervention Unit	188	181	166
Early Intervention Unit Playgroup	156	131	119
Language Intervention Unit	26	24	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>341</b>

Source: Audit Office, based on Education and Training Directorate information

## **APPENDIX E: PRESCHOOL EARLY ENTRY PROGRAMS**

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### **BACKGROUND – PRESCHOOL EARLY ENTRY PROGRAMS**

Preschool Early Entry Programs allow children to access a Preschool class in the year prior to attending Preschool. There are several programs aimed at children from groups with particular needs.

#### **Early Entry for Gifted and Talented**

Children may gain early entry to Preschool on the basis of being gifted and talented. Children are considered gifted and talented when they are assessed and show the following attributes:

- an intellectual ability of between 2.6 and 7.3 years on the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence;
- academic readiness and socio-emotion maturity beyond peers of their age; and
- show outstanding performance in either the arts, business, leisure, sport and technology fields.

#### **Early Entry for Mobility**

Children who have parents with jobs of a mobile nature (e.g. Australian Defence Force personnel) may be disadvantaged by the ACT's age cut-off to attend either Preschool or Kindergarten. To assist children in this situation, they are able to gain early entry into either a Preschool or a Kindergarten class. This allows children to attend a class with children in their age cohort.

#### **Early Entry for English as a Second Language**

Children may gain early entry to Preschool on the basis of having English as a Second Language. Early entry may be available to children who are non-English speakers, who live in non-English speaking homes or who have not had the opportunity to socialise with English speaking children of their own age.

#### **Early Entry for Hearing and Vision**

Children who are vision or hearing impaired and/or have parents who are hearing and vision impaired may also gain early entry into a Preschool program.

#### **Early Entry for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children may also gain early entry into a Preschool program. This is in addition to accessing and attending the Koori Preschool Program.

## PRESCHOOL EARLY ENTRY PROGRAMS ENROLMENTS

Table E.1 shows the number of children enrolled in the different Preschool Early Entry Programs.

**Table E.1: Early Entry Program Enrolments**

	2009	2010	2011	TOTAL
Gifted and Talented	22	19	9	50
Mobility	34	42	33	109
LBOTE	67	66	61	194
Hearing and Vision	1	0	0	1
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	24	15	10	49
Other	No data	No data	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>405</b>

Source: Audit Office, based on enrolment data from ETD's Learning and Teaching Branch

## **APPENDIX F: ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS ICSEA VALUES**

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According to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) My School website:

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a scale that enables meaningful comparisons to be made across schools. It has been developed specifically for the My School website for the purpose of identifying schools serving similar student populations. The variables used in calculating a value on the ICSEA scale include student-level data on the occupation and education level of parents/carers, and/or socio-economic characteristics of the areas where students live, whether a school is in a metropolitan, regional or remote area, proportion of students from a language background other than English, as well as the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at the school.

The average Australia-wide ICSEA value is 1000. A higher ICSEA value represents greater community socio-educational advantage.

In the ACT, student-level data on the occupation and education-level of parents/carers is used to determine a school's ICSEA value.

**Table F.1: ICSEA values - Tuggeranong**

	2011 - school average	2010 – proportion of students in lowest quartile (percent)
Richardson Primary School	914	46
Gilmore Primary School	967	3
Wanniassa School	968	32
Caroline Chisholm School	977	35
Taylor Primary School	982	19
Charles Conder Primary School	983	27
Theodore Primary School	989	23
Namadgi School	993	No data
Gordon Primary School	999	29
Bonython Primary School	1 028	17
Monash Primary School	1 030	17
Calwell Primary School	1 034	20
<b>Isabella Plains ECS</b>	<b>1 047</b>	<b>23</b>
Gowrie Primary School	1 053	3
Wanniassa Hills Primary School	1 057	13
Fadden Primary School	1 098	10

Source: Audit Office, based on data from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) My School website

**Table F.2: ICSEA values – Inner North and South**

	<b>2011 - school average</b>	<b>2010 – proportion of students in lowest quartile (percent)</b>
<b>Narrabundah ECS</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>28</b>
North Ainslie Primary	1 109	12
Majura Primary School	1 137	5
Yarralumla Primary School	1 146	5
Lyneham Primary School	1 147	5
Forrest Primary School	1 151	3
Turner School	1 159	6
Telopea Park School	1 160	4
Ainslie School	1 161	1
Campbell Primary School	1 162	3
Red Hill Primary School	1 171	2
O'Connor Cooperative	1 218	0

Source: Audit Office, based on data from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) My School website

**Table F.3: ICSEA values - Belconnen**

	2011 - school average	2010 – proportion of students in lowest quartile (percent)
Charnwood-Dunlop School	986	39
Kingsford Smith School	1 003	23
Latham Primary School	1 008	27
Macgregor Primary School	1 018	19
Giralang Primary School	1 051	15
Mount Rogers Primary School	1 052	13
Fraser Primary School	1 052	14
Evatt Primary School	1 052	18
Florey Primary School	1 059	17
Macquarie Primary School	1 081	10
Miles Franklin Primary School	1 093	9
Kaleen Primary School	1 112	11
<b>Southern Cross ECS</b>	<b>1 118</b>	<b>13</b>
Hawker Primary School	1 122	8
Weetangera Primary School	1 124	8
Maribyrnong Primary School	1 128	7
Aranda Primary	1 180	2

Source: Audit Office, based on data from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) My School website

**Table F.4: ICSEA values – Woden / Weston Creek**

	<b>2011 - school average</b>	<b>2010 – proportion of students in lowest quartile (percent)</b>
Duffy Primary School	1 068	12
Chapman Primary School	1 087	3
Torrens Primary School	1 094	10
Hughes Primary School	1 102	8
Arawang Primary	1 104	8
Curtin Primary	1 110	0
Mawson Primary School	1 113	4
Farrer Primary School	1 122	5
<b>Lyons ECS</b>	<b>1 166</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Audit Office, based on data from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) My School website



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