

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Family and Child Research Scan

Month: May 2020

Research Scan

The Research Scan presents a selection of research papers relating to key areas prioritised in the Queensland Family and Child Commission's [Research Agenda](#). The Agenda aims to provide the evidence to inform policy and practice across the sector, with a particular focus on gaps identified by the sector.

Understanding the importance of the early years

Title: *State of Early Learning Australia 2019*

Author: Early Childhood Australia. 2019

Purpose: This report provides a comprehensive summary of the early childhood education and care sector in Australia. It includes national goals and performance indicators to help track progress over time.

Key messages: At the national level, the headline figures indicate strong national progress in the provision and quality of early childhood education and care, but areas of unmet need remain. Differences between states and territories and varying policy settings combine to produce inconsistent results for children and families.

Link: <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ELEB-SOEL-2019-report.pdf>

Title: *School starting age and child development in a state-wide, population-level cohort of children in their first year of school in New South Wales, Australia*

Author: Hanly, M., Edwards, B., Goldfeld, S. 2019

Purpose: This study used linked administrative data for children who started school in NSW in 2009 or 2012. It identifies child, family and area characteristics associated with delayed entry, and explores the relationship between school starting age and five domains of child development, measured using the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) in the first year of school.

Key messages: The study found there was a strong, significant relationship between school starting age and early childhood development. Each month of maturity corresponded to an increase of approximately 3% in the probability of scoring above the 25th percentile in all five AEDC domains. Independent of school starting age, children who were older in relation to their classroom peers had better development outcomes.

Link: <https://core.ac.uk/reader/322749749>

Recognising the strengths of Indigenous families and communities

Title: *Closing the Gap Report 2020*

Author: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Australian Government. 2020

Purpose: This is the Australian Government's annual report on Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. The report provides information on national progress towards the seven key Closing the Gap areas.

Key messages: This is the last report using the Closing the Gap Framework that has existed for 12 years. The new Joint Council on Closing the Gap is developing priorities, targets and metrics that all governments and the

Coalition of Peaks will commit to achieving. At the core of the new process is the expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, guiding local action and local change.

The key Closing the Gap key areas in the existing framework are child mortality, early childhood education, school attendance, literacy and numeracy, year 12 attainment, employment, life expectancy.

The report shows that two targets, early childhood education and year 12 attainment are on track to meet their target. Other targets have shown improvements but also demonstrate areas of concern that require more progress.

Link: <https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdf/closing-the-gap-report-2020.pdf>

Title: *Improving Housing and Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence for Indigenous Individuals and Families*

Author: Cripps, K. and Habibis, D. 2019

Purpose: This study investigated the needs of Indigenous women and children in response to domestic and family violence.

Key messages: This study identifies that Indigenous women and children have very limited housing pathways to choose from in the aftermath of domestic and family violence.

Acute shortages in crisis, transitional and long-term housing, particularly in regional and remote locations mean Indigenous women and children are routinely turned away from refuges and safe houses because they are at capacity.

Link: <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/320>

Supporting young people disengaging from education

Title: *Australia's Children in Brief*

Author: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2019

Purpose: This report is a summary in infographic format of the main findings of the *Australia's children* report. It includes data on children's wellbeing and their experiences at home, school and in the community.

Key messages: School attendance can be affected by a range of issues such as housing, a child's physical health and mental health, and family violence and unemployment.

In 2018, the national attendance rate for Year 5 students was 93%, with little difference between boys and girls. Attendance rates were higher in major cities (94%) compared with very remote areas (77%) and for non-Indigenous students (94%) and Indigenous students (86%).

Link: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/d7bac9ef-8a15-4ee3-a854-25c6052ba478/aihw-cws-72.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

Title: *Evaluating Auditory Function in Primary School Children with Learning Difficulties in Australia*

Author: Choi, Seong Min (Robyn). 2019

Purpose: This is a thesis submitted to the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Queensland. It explores whether children with learning difficulties have higher rates of impaired hearing or impaired auditory processing with typically developing children.

Key messages: This research found that children with learning difficulties have higher rates of impaired hearing and/or auditory processing compared with typically developing children.

Link: <https://core.ac.uk/reader/286811693>

Creating opportunities for young people leaving care

Title: *Child Protection Australia 2018–19*

Author: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2020

Purpose: This is the annual report of Australian child protection data. The data is disaggregated by state or territory and has chapters on children receiving child protection services; notifications, investigations and substantiations; care and protection orders; out-of-home care; permanency; and, carers and intensive family support services.

Key messages: One in 33 children aged 0-17 received child protection services in 2018-19. One in 6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children received child protection services. Emotional abuse was the most common type of abuse or neglect. Children from remote areas had the highest rates of substantiation. At 30 June 2019, there were approximately 44,900 children in out-of-home care with 92% in home-based care.

Link: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/3a25c195-e30a-4f10-a052-adbfd56d6d45/aihw-cws-74.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

Improving youth mental health

Title: *Changing Direction: Mental Health Needs of Justice-involved Young People in Australia*

Authors: Meurk, C. Steele, M. Yap, L. *et al.* 2019.

Purpose: This report presents key findings on mental health issues and disorders among justice-involved young people (14-17 years of age).

Key messages: Young people in contact with the justice system represent some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians. Of those surveyed: three-quarters had experienced some form of abuse, almost half reported that they had experienced a head injury that resulted in loss of consciousness, and 23% reported that they had ever attempted suicide compared with 4% of their peers in the general population.

Link: https://kirby.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/kirby/report/MEH-JOSH_Report.pdf

Leading in changing times

Title: *Human Services: The next wave of productivity reform*

Author: Stephen King, Commissioner, Queensland Productivity Commission. 2019

Purpose: This is a presentation by Commissioner Stephen King from the Queensland Productivity Commission given at the November 2019 QPC Productivity lecture in which he argues that Australia is at the beginning of a new wave of productivity reform in the human services area.

Key messages: This paper argues that Australia is at the beginning of a new wave of productivity reform in the human services area, similar to those experienced by the key infrastructure industries more than 25 years ago under the reforms flowing from the Hilmer report on National Competition Policy.

This paper argues that human services operate in markets that are anything but normal and that for many human services, consumers are disempowered, competition, if it exists, is managed, and incentives are distorted. Moving from a 'provider knows best' to a consumer-centred approach is critical to improving productivity in human services.

Link: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3502734