

Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)

Fact Sheet



Australian Early Development Index



Background

Investing resources and energy into children's early years brings life-long benefits to children and to the whole community.

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is a measure of how young children are developing in different communities. This information helps communities and governments pinpoint the types of services, resources and support that young children and their families need to give children the best possible start in life.

What is the AEDI?

The AEDI, based on the Canadian Early Development Instrument (EDI), is a population measure of young children's development. Like a census, it involves collecting information to help create a snapshot of early childhood development in communities across Australia.

Teachers complete a checklist for children in their first year of full-time school. The checklist measures five key areas, or domains, of child development:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge.

These are important areas of child development and also good predictors of adult health, education and social outcomes.

As a population measure, the AEDI places the focus on all children in the community; it examines early childhood development across the whole community. Moving the focus of effort from the individual child to all children in the community can make a bigger difference in supporting efforts to create optimal early childhood development.

While the AEDI is completed by teachers, results are reported for the communities where children live, not where they go to school. The initial AEDI results allow communities to see how local children are doing relative to, or compared to other children in their community, and across Australia.

Every child
deserves the
best start
in life

National implementation

The AEDI is conducted by the Centre for Community Child Health (at The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne and a key research centre of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute), in partnership with the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Perth.

Between 2004 and 2008, the AEDI *Building Better Communities for Children* pilot project was carried out across 60 Australian communities from all states and territories (excluding the Northern Territory). This involved more than 56,000 children and over 3,000 teachers.

Following the AEDI's successful pilot, the Australian Government provided \$21.9 million for the national implementation of the AEDI in recognition of the need for all communities to have information about their children's development.

In 2009, the AEDI was completed nationwide for the first time. Between 1 May and 31 July, information was collected on 261,203 children (97.5 per cent of the estimated national five-year-old population). This involved 15,528 teachers from 7,423 Government, Catholic and Independent schools around Australia.

The AEDI
is a national
progress measure
of early childhood
development



AEDI results

The first release of results (December 2009) will enable communities across Australia to begin to have a picture of early childhood development outcomes for their community.

For communities with small numbers of children, or where demographic data are incomplete, AEDI results will not be available in 2009. For those communities with small numbers of children, follow-up data collection will occur in 2010. The final national release of results for all communities will be in early 2011.

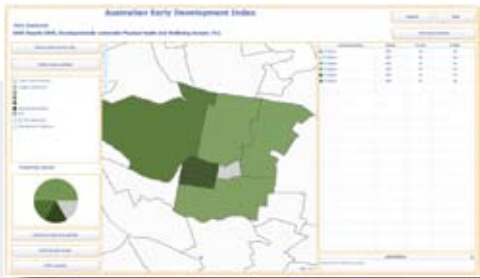
How are the AEDI results presented?

A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia – AEDI National Report 2009

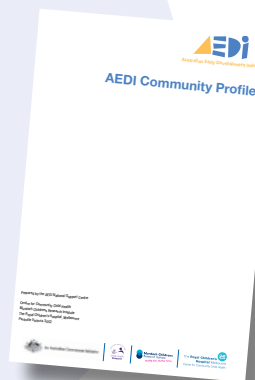
provides a summary of initial AEDI results for Australia.



Online maps provide communities with a visual representation of the initial AEDI results at a local level.



Community Profiles (available March 2010) provide contextual information about the community and its initial AEDI results and support the mapped results.



AEDI results are available at www.aedi.org.au

How can the AEDI results help communities to support their children and families?

The AEDI results give communities a snapshot of how children in their local area have developed by the time they start school. The results can help communities understand what's working well and what needs to be improved or developed in their community to better support children and their families.

By providing a common ground on which people can work together, the AEDI results can help build and strengthen communities to give children the best start in life. Together with other socio-demographic and community information, the AEDI results are a powerful tool for influencing planning and policy around early childhood development.

The AEDI can:

- increase awareness of the importance of children's early years
- provide an evidence base for the development of community initiatives that support healthy child development
- support more effective use of resources, such as playgroups, health centres and libraries
- strengthen links between schools, kindergartens, preschools, playgroups, local government agencies, health centres, libraries and other local organisations and encourage them to explore new ways of working together
- provide schools with the opportunity to reflect on the development of local children as they enter school and to consider and plan for optimal school transition
- support efforts to re-focus community services and systems towards children.

Strong communities are good for children



For more information about the AEDI, and to access AEDI results and resources visit www.aedi.org.au



An Australian Government Initiative

