



# AUSTRALIAN EARLY DEVELOPMENT INDEX

2009-2011 National Implementation

## DATA PROTOCOL

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## Introduction

It has been well established that the level of physical, emotional and cognitive development of school-entry age children is associated with their later success and well-being. To gain information about the current population of these young children the Australian Government has funded the national implementation of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI).

The AEDI has been identified as one of the national progress measures for COAG's human capital reform agenda and recommended by the Working Group for Intergenerational Reform (WGIR) as one of the national early childhood progress measures for closing the gap in Indigenous life outcomes.

The AEDI aims:

*to improve early childhood development outcomes of all Australian children by providing communities, governments and policy makers with the information they need to plan and evaluate their efforts in achieving optimal child development outcomes for children. It is designed to provide community level data to help Governments and communities understand how children are developing by the time they reach school.*

The AEDI delivers essential information about early childhood development and provides insights into how children's environment and background may be related to their outcomes. This information will enable communities and governments to pinpoint the types of services, resources and support mechanisms that young children and their families need to give them the best possible start in life.

AEDI data are collected on children in their first year of full-time school through a teacher-completed checklist. The AEDI checklist consist of more than 100 questions across five domains of early childhood development: *i)* physical health and well being, *ii)* social competence, *iii)* emotional maturity, *iv)* language and cognitive development, and *v)* communication skills and general knowledge .

The primary output of the AEDI national implementation will be results reported through a national report and at the community or population level through maps and community profiles. This information will provide communities with a picture of their strengths and vulnerabilities on each of the five developmental domains to inform local planning and service development for children. In addition individual schools participating will be provided a school profile.

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) was originally developed in Canada and has proven to be a reliable and valid population tool that provides useful information to communities on the health and development of children at school entry. In 2002 and 2003 the Canadian EDI was piloted in Australia. Between 2004 and 2008 the Canadian EDI was adapted for use in Australia (the AEDI) and was piloted in 62 communities across the country. Between 2009 and 2011 the AEDI will be implemented nationally.

### The Purpose of the AEDI Data Protocol

This Data Protocol document sets out the principles and protocols governing the collection, access, use and dissemination of the AEDI data collected during the 2009-2011 National Implementation of the AEDI. The purpose of this protocol is to clarify the rights and responsibilities for relevant stakeholders and to provide guidance for the work of the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee in ensuring the proper and effective use of the AEDI data.

The development of this protocol has been undertaken in consultation with States/Territories and other stakeholders. Particular care has been taken in consulting with Australian Indigenous<sup>1</sup> community organisations and other stakeholders with regard to the most appropriate processes for the collection and reporting of AEDI data for Indigenous communities and other special populations (e.g. LBOTE).

## **Definition of AEDI data**

For the purpose of this Data Protocol, AEDI data are defined as:

*All data collected by the 2009-2011 National AEDI Program using the AEDI through the online data collection system and other approved mechanisms.*

It should be noted that the AEDI is designed and intended to produce reliable population-level data. Consequently, the AEDI data are not designed or intended to produce diagnostic data about the status and performance of individual children or provide measures of school, class or teacher performance.

## **Guiding principles for this Data Protocol**

To ensure the proper and effective use of the AEDI the following guiding principles govern the collection, access, use and dissemination of all AEDI data.

### **3.1 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

At all stages of the AEDI data collection and reporting processes, the privacy of individuals involved either as data collectors (the teachers) or as data sources (the children) are to be maintained in accordance with national, state and territory privacy legislation and policies.

Where AEDI data are disseminated it will be de-identified unless otherwise stated.

### **3.2 LEGAL CONFORMITY**

The process by which the data have been collected must adhere to national and State and Territory legislation and/or policies. It is the responsibility of the contractor (the Centre for Community Child Health) to ensure that this is the case.

### **3.3 FORMAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Ownership of the AEDI data resides with the Australian Government (which is currently represented by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations).

State and Territory Governments and non-government school systems, the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) Melbourne, in partnership with the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (TICHR), Perth and the Offord Centre, Canada have special rights to the data, which are detailed later in the protocol.

The CCCH/TICHR partnership will act as manager and host of the AEDI data.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Indigenous” is used throughout this document to refer to people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

### **3.4 QUALITY**

The contractor shall ensure that all procedures undertaken in the collection and subsequent composition of the datasets adhere to the highest possible standards. Every effort must be made to ensure that the AEDI data is complete and free from error. Measures must be taken also to ensure that the data are collected in a consistent way from all the participants. In addition, where possible every effort should be made to facilitate the usage of AEDI data with other relevant national or State/Territory data where appropriate.

### **3.5 SECURITY**

The data collection techniques and reporting technologies must ensure the integrity and security of the AEDI data. Security protocols are to be agreed between the contractor and the data owner to ensure against unauthorised access, accidental destruction and modification. The AEDI data are to be stored with secure backup and in a situation well protected from environmental hazards. Third parties, which are given access to the data, must also employ security protocols to protect the data.

### **3.6 APPROPRIATE FEEDBACK TO DATA PROVIDERS**

While the AEDI is not a tool for individual diagnostic testing, it is desirable that the principals of individual schools receive confidential aggregated information about the students in their own schools. In addition, the relevant education systems will have access to aggregate AEDI data for students attending schools within their system.

### **3.7 DISSEMINATION**

Ongoing analysis and dissemination of results using the AEDI data are seen as important goals of the AEDI with the primary purpose being to report back to the communities involved. In addition, researchers and planners, both government and private, national and international, are to be encouraged to utilise AEDI data in an attempt to expand the knowledge base in this significant field.

Public reporting of AEDI data should strive to achieve a balance between the community's right to know with the need to ensure public understanding and minimise the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse of the information.

Special provision should be made to support the reporting of findings back to Indigenous communities or communities with a high proportion of Indigenous children. This should aim to ensure that the reporting of AEDI findings takes proper account of specific cultural and communication requirements. Similar care should also be taken to enable the effective reporting, public understanding and community utilisation of AEDI data on children from language backgrounds other than English.

### **3.8 ONGOING REVIEW**

To ensure that this protocol remains a contemporary document and relevant to the emerging data and planning needs of stakeholders, this protocol should be reviewed from time to time and at least every three years. The AEDI Strategic Policy Committee will oversee such a review process.

### **3.9 ACCOUNTABILITY**

All parties using AEDI data are accountable for how they use the data, which must be in accordance with this Data Protocol and related documents.

### 3.10 TRANSPARENCY

Clear documentation describing all the procedures associated with collection, access, use and dissemination of AEDI data should be publicised and be readily available to interested parties on the AEDI National Support Centre website. The documentation should also be available to communities and stakeholders not having ready access to the Internet.

### 3.11 SUSTAINABILITY

The AEDI is designed to provide community level data to help Governments and communities better understand how children are developing by the time they reach school. As one of the identified COAG national progress measures, it is important the AEDI can be used in conjunction with other national, state and local data to enable more understanding and monitoring of strategies and programs to improve early child development. The contractor housing the AEDI data must ensure that appropriate archiving arrangements are made to ensure that the data are available to interested parties in the future.

The use of the AEDI must not jeopardise future data collections. For example, as the AEDI is a measure of how children are developing prior to school it is not appropriate or valid to use the AEDI as a measure of school performance.

## Managing the data from the AEDI

### 4.1 ACCESS TO AEDI DATA

Subject to appropriate approval, AEDI data will be made available for any legitimate research or analysis purpose, including data linkage. Requests for access to AEDI data will be considered by the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee.

#### AEDI Strategic Policy Committee

##### *Purpose*

A national AEDI Strategic Policy Committee (for which the Australian Government will provide secretariat support) has been established to provide strategic policy direction and oversight for AEDI data, to ensure that:

- confidence in the integrity and quality of AEDI data for its agreed purposes is achieved and maintained;
- the potential value of AEDI data are realised over time;
- the legitimate interests of all AEDI data stakeholders are acknowledged and addressed; and
- strategic AEDI data risks and issues are identified and effectively addressed.

##### *Role*

The role of the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee is to:

- oversee the use of AEDI data and ensure the Data Protocol and related documents are published or easily accessible;
- determine policies and processes for the access, use and dissemination of AEDI data;
- approve and oversee requests for access to and appropriate use of AEDI data;
- approve and oversee the administrative processes to facilitate the linkage of AEDI data to other relevant data;

- ensure the legitimate interests of AEDI data stakeholders are acknowledged and addressed; and
- monitor and address strategic AEDI data risks and issues.

### **Membership**

The membership of the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee will be at a senior level and will be comprised of a core group of suitably skilled people including:

- Australian Government (Convenor);
- A representative from the Centre for Community Child Health (as a National AEDI Program Partnership representative);
- A representative from the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (as a National AEDI Program Partnership representative);
- State and Territory jurisdiction representatives;
- A representative from the Australian Bureau of Statistics;
- A representative from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare;
- A representative from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs;
- A representative from the Department of Health and Ageing;
- A representative from the non-government schools sector; and
- The Chair of the AEDI Technical Advisory Group.

To ensure that the needs of stakeholders are taken into account, the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee may review and add to its membership from time to time. It may also seek specific expertise, for instance in relation to data linkage or the needs of specific community groups, such as Indigenous and LBOTE.

### **Data access procedure**

There will be a two step process to gain access to unpublished data which is hosted with the contractor for the AEDI:

1. All applications to gain access to unpublished data will be made firstly to the host. The host will assess the application based on published guidelines ensuring that the data being sought and the way it will be used will meet the desired outcomes of the applicant and the information being sought will not breach any confidentiality provisions. The host will pass on the application to the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee and may provide advice to the Committee in relation to the application.
2. The AEDI Strategic Policy Committee, through its secretariat, will further assess the application to ensure that it meets the principles of the Data Protocol and inform the host of the decision. If approved the host will manage the release of the data.

Authorised users of the data will be required to maintain the security and confidentiality of the data.

### **Access to AEDI data**

Any access to the AEDI data must be for appropriate use consistent with the principles outlined in this protocol. Prior to the entities listed below being provided access to the AEDI data, a senior representative will be required to sign for the data, indicating that their organisation will fully adhere to the Data Protocol. Once the signed agreement is received by the host, the following will be provided to:

- the Australian Government (currently represented by DEEWR, FaHCSIA and DoHA) which will have access to all data from the AEDI;

- the State/Territory Government departments which will have access to all data from the AEDI for their jurisdiction, with government schools identified for education departments and other schools/sectors not identified;
- the relevant non-government school systems which will have access to the AEDI data from schools in their jurisdiction;
- schools will have access to their own school profile consistent with agreed confidentiality provisions; and
- the Offord Centre for Child Studies, Canada will have access to all data from the AEDI.

All other entities (including research and other organisations) will need to apply for access as noted under section 4.2.2.

## 4.2 REPORTING RESULTS FROM THE AEDI

### Introduction

The following concepts underpin and support the meaningful reporting and release of reports based on AEDI data:

- reporting will be against the nationally agreed data protocols (this document) agreed by MCEECDYA;
- no information that permits the reporting of individual students will be permitted;
- reporting in the national report, community maps and community profiles will form the primary release of information and will be disaggregated to support public understanding, with disaggregation only occurring where the data are assessed to a suitable level of confidence and validity; and
- information should be presented so that it can be clearly understood without the need for complex statistical knowledge.

### Public release of reports

The timeline for the implementation of the AEDI includes two stages of data collection – one in May-July 2009 which includes all local communities in the population and a second one in May-July 2010 which includes a second round of data collection in small communities where there were insufficient numbers from the initial collection.

This means that there will be two releases of data from the AEDI – the first set will be almost complete, but will not include data from small communities, while the second one will be complete.

The preliminary release (without the second round of data collection that will take place in May-July 2010) through the national report and community maps will be under embargo until December 2009. There will be an embargo of a further three months (until March 2010) before the release of the community profiles from the preliminary AEDI dataset.

The final release (including the second round of data collection that will take place in May-July 2010), will be under embargo until December 2010 when it will be released through a national report and community maps. This information will be further enhanced with final community profiles by March 2011.

The national report, community maps and community profiles, for both the preliminary and final release, will be pre-released, under embargo, to jurisdictions.

### **Australian Government release of reports based on unpublished data**

If the Australian Government (currently represented by DEEWR, FaHCSIA and DoHA) wishes to publicly disseminate reports, including presentations, papers and other materials based on previously unpublished AEDI data at a level below the national level, then the Australian Government will advise State/Territory representatives on the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee, providing them with a draft, embargoed copy of the proposed material at least one month prior to its release.

### **CCCH and TICHR release of reports based on unpublished data**

CCCH and TICHR, as the data collection agents, will have full access to all of the AEDI data. If they wish to publicly disseminate reports, including presentations, papers and other materials based on previously unpublished AEDI data (at any level), they must provide a draft, embargoed copy of the proposed material to the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee at least one month prior to its release.

### **The Offord Centre for Child Studies, Canada release of reports based on unpublished data**

The Offord Centre for Child Studies as the owner of the Early Development Index has the right to access data from the AEDI through its agreement with CCCH and TICHR. However, as with all entities, the Centre will have to strictly abide by the Data Protocol and if it wishes to publicly disseminate reports, including presentations, papers and other materials based on previously unpublished AEDI data (at any level), it must provide a draft, embargoed copy of the proposed material to the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee for approval at least one month prior to its intended release.

### **Release of reports based on unpublished data by other entities**

State and Territory departments and the relevant non-government school systems may release reports, including presentations, papers and other materials based on previously unpublished AEDI data that is held by them. As a courtesy, prior to the release of any materials by these entities, the report should be provided to the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee at least one month prior to its release.

All other entities (including research and other organisations not identified above) that have applied and been granted access to previously unpublished AEDI data (as noted through section 4.2.2) will also be required to provide a draft, embargoed copy of the proposed reports, including presentations, papers and other materials to the AEDI Strategic Policy Committee for approval at least one month prior to its intended release.