



October 2021

Selection of locations for new Children's Contact Services

Children's Contact Services

The Attorney-General's Department's currently funds 64 Children's Contact Services (CCSs) across Australia for families who are unable to safely manage arrangements for the contact and changeover of their children.

CCSs provide a safe, reliable and neutral place to assist parents with the changeover of children and supervised visits to assist separated parents to manage contact arrangements, especially where there are concerns about safety.

In the May 2021 Budget, the Australian Government announced that it would be increasing funding for CCSs to \$101.4 million over four years from 2021-22 to enhance existing and establish new services. This initiative includes ongoing funding of \$27.5 million over three years from 2022-23 to establish 20 additional CCSs across Australia. The department is working to implement this measure.

The funding is intended to provide increased accessibility of CCSs for families who need the support of these services, and reduce waiting times.

Methodology

The department has developed a methodology which estimates demand for new Children's Contact Services (CCSs) by Statistical Level Area Level 4 (SA4).

The department is seeking feedback on the draft methodology through a targeted survey.

The department will consider this feedback prior to settling the methodology. Once the methodology is finalised, locations will be generated for inclusion in a Grant Opportunity process. Applications to provide services at selected locations will be sought through a grant selection process in early 2022 through the Department of Social Services Community Grants Hub.

A draft list of the 30 highest ranking locations generated through the methodology has been included in this paper for illustrative purposes only, to assist stakeholders understand the practical application of the methodology and elicit informed feedback. It does not constitute the final list of locations (Appendix A).

Under the methodology SA4s¹ have been ranked based on their demand for new CCSs, considering the following 5 factors:

1. **Population per CCS**
2. **Proximity to nearest CCS**
3. **Access to pathway services** (Family Relationship Centres, Regional Family Dispute Resolution services)
4. **Median income**
5. **Government benefit reliance**

While a range of additional factors were considered for inclusion in this methodology, these 5 factors were selected for relevance and due to the availability of a nationally consistent dataset.

Under the methodology, the **first 3 factors consider the population of people that have at least one dependent child that has a parent living in a different household as the target cohort.**² This target cohort recognises the group of people that are most likely to use a CCS, given the purpose of CCS is to assist separating or separated families, in which a dependent child will be separated from at least one parent.

The **final 2 factors (the socioeconomic factors), are both restricted to people in the 25-49 years of age cohort.** This recognises that clients of the family law system are disproportionately from this age cohort.³

The weights given to each of the factors included in the methodology are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Factor	Weight
Population per CCS	42%
Proximity to nearest CCS	18%
Access to pathway services	16%
Median income	15%
Government benefit reliance	9%
TOTAL WEIGHT	100%

¹ The ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) framework for 2011, has been used in the application of this methodology. SA4s are the largest sub-State geographical areas as defined by the ABS. While in regional areas, SA4s tend to have populations somewhere between (100,000 - 300,000), metropolitan areas tend to have larger populations (300,000 - 500,000).

² Data used to estimate population per CCS, came from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey 2019.

³ People aged 25-49 years made up around 34.9% of the general population in Australia at 30 June 2019, but made up around 75.6% of family law service clients.

Factors Considered under the Methodology

Population per CCS

SA4s with a higher target cohort population per CCS are ranked higher as it suggests they have greater potential demand in the area for a new centre. Some SA4s already have one or multiple CCSs and others have none. To account for this, the target cohort population is adjusted for the presence of existing CCSs to account for SA4s that may be able to provide services to the target cohort without having to add a new centre.

Proximity to nearest CCS

SA4s with a longer total distance are ranked higher as it suggests they have greater difficulties accessing nearby CCSs. The total distance is the distance from the centre of the SA4 to the closest CCS multiplied by the target cohort population for each SA4. This is used to adjust the proximity rankings such that large SA4s with low population (e.g. Northern Territory – Outback) do not rank high just because they are significantly larger in area which wouldn't necessarily indicate higher demand.

Access to pathway services

SA4s with a higher target cohort population and number of pathway services are ranked higher in recognition that pathway services refer clients to CCSs and CCS clients are likely to require other support services. Pathway services are Family Relationship Centres and Regional Family Dispute Resolution services.

Median Income

SA4s with a lower median annual disposable income for people (aged 25-49 years) are ranked higher⁴. This is because clients of the family law system are disproportionately low income earners and in this age cohort.⁵

Government benefit reliance

SA4s with a higher share of people (aged 25-49 years) that receive more than 30 per cent⁶ of their income from government benefits are ranked higher⁷. This is because clients of the family law system are disproportionately reliant on government benefits as their main income source.

⁴ Data used to estimate median income by SA4 came from the HILDA Survey 2019.

⁵ Data from the Department of Social Services Data Exchange (DEX) shows that 44.7% of family law services clients are in the bottom 25% of income earners across Australia.

⁶ A threshold of 30% or more was chosen as 30% represents twice the average for this age cohort (i.e. reliance of government benefits as a share of income is 14.7% for 25 to 49 year olds).

⁷ Data used to estimate reliance on government benefits by SA4 came from the HILDA Survey 2019.

Appendix A:

Note: The following list is provided for illustrative purposes only (and may not reflect the list of locations utilised for the selection process)

Table 2: Top 30 SA4s by greatest estimated demand for a new CCS

Rank	SA4 Name	State	Existing CCSs	Existing pathway services
1	Wide Bay	QLD	1	6
2	Barossa - Yorke - Mid North	SA	0	2
3	New England and North West	NSW	0	12
4	Sunshine Coast	QLD	1	1
5	Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	NSW	0	4
6	Melbourne - North West	VIC	0	1
7	Bunbury	WA	1	1
8	Gold Coast	QLD	1	1
9	Melbourne - Outer East	VIC	0	3
10	North West	VIC	1	2
11	Mornington Peninsula	VIC	1	0
12	Moreton Bay - North	QLD	2	1
13	Melbourne - South East	VIC	0	1
14	Perth - South West	WA	1	0
15	Launceston and North East	TAS	1	2
16	Melbourne - West	VIC	2	2
17	West and North West	TAS	1	1
18	Central West	NSW	1	7
19	Melbourne - North East	VIC	0	2
20	Cairns	QLD	1	0
21	Perth - North East	WA	0	1
22	Richmond - Tweed	NSW	1	4
23	Logan - Beaudesert	QLD	1	0
24	Latrobe - Gippsland	VIC	2	5
25	Townsville	QLD	1	2
26	Ipswich	QLD	1	1
27	Sydney - Outer West and Blue Mountains	NSW	1	1
28	Brisbane - East	QLD	0	0
29	Riverina	NSW	0	5
30	Western Australia - Outback	WA	2	5