

## THE AEDI: HELPING COMMUNITIES BUILD BETTER COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN

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In an exciting first for Australia, from 2009 every community will know how their children are developing at the time they start school. Following the successful four-year pilot of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) across 60 Australian communities, involving 2,157 teachers from 1,012 schools gathering information on the development of 37,420 children, the Commonwealth Government has provided \$15.9 million for national rollout.

The AEDI provides information about how communities have raised their children before school. The AEDI is a population measure of early childhood development based on five developmental areas: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge. The AEDI checklist is completed by the class teachers for every child in their first year of full time school, based on the teacher's knowledge and observations of the child. Teachers who have already completed the AEDI have found the checklist easy to complete, was beneficial to their work in the classroom and a good use of their time.

Communities in Western Australia were among the first in the country to complete the AEDI. Twenty three communities across Western Australia have been able to use the AEDI to plan the best future for their children. Between 2004 and 2007, AEDI checklists were completed on 11,483 Western Australian children by 619 teachers from 360 government and non-government schools. Eleven Western Australian communities are completing the AEDI for a second time in 2008. These communities will now have follow up information on how well they are supporting early childhood development.

An evaluation of communities involved in the pilot found the AEDI assisted them to:

- Raise community awareness of the importance of early childhood development
- Build stronger relationships and work more collaboratively
- Promote strategic development and planning for the needs of young children and their families
- Develop new initiatives to support early childhood development

The AEDI has been endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) as a national progress measure of early childhood development and is conducted by the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH), Melbourne in partnership with the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Perth. The AEDI has been adapted for Indigenous children as part of the Indigenous AEDI Project being undertaken at Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, through its Kulunga Research Network and the Centre for Developmental Health, Curtin University jointly funded by the Commonwealth Government and Shell Australia.

More information about the Western Australian AEDI Coordinating Committee and the State AEDI Coordinator will be provided in future updates.

For more information about the AEDI visit [www.australianedi.org.au](http://www.australianedi.org.au) or contact the AEDI National Support Centre on 1300 558 422 or e-mail: [australianedi@rch.org.au](mailto:australianedi@rch.org.au).