

November 2011

Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

Review of the National Partnership on
Homelessness Working Group

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Chapter 1

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (the NPAH) was agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in November 2008 and commenced in January 2009. It was formulated as one of several Commonwealth and State agreements agreed by COAG in late 2008 that highlighted the importance of addressing homelessness:

- the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) includes the outcome that people who are homelessness or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion; and
- the National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing (NPASH) aimed to increase the supply of social housing and to contribute to a reduction in homelessness and improved outcomes for homeless and Indigenous Australians.

As well, the Social Housing Initiative (SHI), a component of the Commonwealth's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (the Stimulus Plan)¹, agreed by COAG in February 2009, includes the objective of providing opportunities for homeless people to obtain secure accommodation.

At the same time, the Commonwealth separately signalled its commitment to reducing homelessness through a Green Paper and then a White Paper on Homelessness, *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, released in December 2008. The State and Territory Governments also developed strategies to better address homelessness, including through state and territory and regional homelessness plans.

The Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments committed resources of \$1.1 billion to the NPAH. The agreement is designed to contribute to the NAHA outcome that "People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion". The NPAH outcomes are that:

1. fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough;
2. fewer people will become homeless more than once;
3. people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation; and

¹ <http://www.economicstimulusplan.gov.au/housing/pages/default.aspx>

4. people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing.

1.2 The Review of the National Partnership on Homelessness

In May 2011, the Review of the NPAH Working Group (the Working Group) was established to undertake a mid-term review of the NPAH. The objectives of the review were to:

- provide an assessment of progress towards the achievement of the outcomes of the agreement;
- address the performance reporting issues identified by a review by the Heads of Commonwealth and State Treasuries (HoTs) and in reports by the COAG Reform Council; and
- review the NPAH performance reporting framework.²

The review was undertaken by representatives of Commonwealth and State and Territory First Ministers' departments, Treasuries and line agencies with responsibilities related to homelessness (working group members), supported by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the COAG Reform Council (CRC) and the Secretariat for the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision.

1.3 Methodology

In assessing progress against the outcomes of the NPAH, the Working Group considered the jurisdictions' NPAH annual reports (the Annual Reports) and additional material on effective strategies; reviewed available data and publications on homelessness; and consulted a range of stakeholders with expertise in homelessness. The contribution that the NPAH made to the outcomes was considered in the context of the other agreements and initiatives with similar objectives, including the NAHA, other National Partnership Agreements and government programs targeted towards housing and/or homelessness.

The Working Group found that it was often difficult to distinguish the impacts of the NPAH on homelessness from those of other initiatives outside the NPAH³.

Due to the limited amount of direct data available to inform its assessment of progress, the Working Group sought ancillary or proxy data which could be of assistance to address this gap. Consultation with stakeholders also provided a perspective from outside government, although time and other constraints meant this was largely confined to peak bodies, advisory groups and key service providers.

To address the performance reporting issues, the Working Group analysed each of the performance indicators in the NPAH performance reporting framework against the HoTs conceptual framework⁴, considered the effectiveness of each indicator in

² The Terms of Reference of the NPAH review are at Appendix 1

³ Discussed further on page 9, 'Improving ability to assess progress against outcomes'.

⁴ http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/performance_reporting/conceptual_framework_performance_reporting_feb_11.pdf

measuring the targets of the NPAH and deliberated on the policy justifications for particular indicators.

In light of the National Disability Strategy and the National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage (Closing the Gap), the Working Group was asked to give separate consideration in its review to outcomes for people with disability and Indigenous Australians. In arriving at its recommendations for a revised performance reporting framework, the Working Group considered whether particular indicators could be disaggregated by Indigenous status and disability, as well as age and gender.

For each indicator, an assessment was made as to whether there was sufficient justification for its retention and, if so, whether it should be revised to make it more effective. Consideration was given to the introduction of new performance indicators. The Working Group also assessed the appropriateness of the current benchmarks and addressed two recommendations concerning performance reporting, made to COAG by the CRC in its report, *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness: Early Assessment of Progress 2009-10* in July 2010.⁵

Finally, the Working Group considered a cost benefit analysis of its proposed changes to the performance reporting framework and of an alternative option to develop data that would enable robust measurement and reporting of the homeless population.

1.4 Progress against outcomes – findings and recommendations

1.4.1 Findings

The review found some evidence of progress towards the NPAH outcomes. A range of ancillary data, including surveys and stakeholder consultations, suggested that, in particular, services for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness had improved (outcomes three and four above).

However, the Working Group found that there was insufficient evidence to reach a definitive conclusion that the NPAH will meet all its 2013 targets, in part because:

- there are issues with timeliness and coverage of data: 2010-11 data was not available in time for the review.
 - 2009-10 data do not show the full impact of programs and initiatives funded under the NPAH, many of which were still being established in 2010, or many dwellings funded under the Social Housing Initiatives and the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS), which are still being built; and
- national population level data from the 2011 Census of Population and Housing (the Census) will not be available until the second half of 2012.

⁵ The executive summary is provided at Appendix 3

Quantitative Data

In the absence of national population level data, the Working Group did not find clear evidence that progress has been made in relation to the first outcome, reducing the number of people becoming homeless and the number sleeping rough.

However, information on the number of homeless people in the period since the Census, obtained from informal surveys of rough sleepers carried out in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney indicated reductions in the number of rough sleepers. While these surveys do not provide robust or comparable data, they do give a useful snapshot of homelessness in capital cities at a point in time.

There is also evidence of an increase in the support provided to rough sleepers in the services contributing to the AIHW Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) data collection from 2008-09 to 2009-10, which could indicate that rough sleepers are more likely to obtain housing⁶. However, while data on usage of specialist homelessness services show an increase in the number of homeless people receiving assistance, it is not clear whether this reflects increased access to support or increases in the homeless population⁷.

There is some encouraging evidence of progress on the second outcome, relating to reductions in repeat homelessness. AIHW SAAP data show that the proportion of clients experiencing repeat homelessness declined from 10.4 per cent in 2006-07 to 8.5 per cent of SAAP clients in 2009-10, from 19,541 to 18,690 people.

It is not possible to directly assess progress against the third outcome, that people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation. As outlined in Chapter 3, SAAP data indicate a reduction in the proportion of SAAP clients aged 12 to 17 years who re-engaged with family, school and work from 2006-07 to 2009-10. Whether this reflects reduced need is not clear.

There is evidence of improved access to employment. Evidence from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) shows that under the new job services arrangements, Jobs Services Australia (JSA), in place since July 2009, there is continual improvement in employment outcomes for the most disadvantaged homeless job seekers. In the year ending June 2011, over 26 per cent of Stream 4 homeless job seekers⁸ achieved an employment outcome compared to around 13 per cent of homeless job seekers under the former Personal Support Programme (PSP) in the year ending September 2009. A significant number

⁶ The funding for SAAP was incorporated into the NAHA from 1 January 2009. The SAAP data collection was replaced by an enhanced Specialist Homelessness Services data collection from 1 July 2011.

⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Government-funded specialist homelessness services: SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2009-10: Australia*, pp 5-6

⁸ Job seekers classified in Stream 4 are for the most highly disadvantaged job seekers with severe non-vocational barriers

of projects funded under the NPAH aim to help homeless people access employment and training.

In relation to the fourth outcome, that people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing, there is also evidence of progress.

Investment under the NPAH has increased assistance to homeless clients, with over 180 initiatives implemented in 2010-11 and assistance provided to clients on over 170,000 occasions. SAAP data confirm that there have been small but continuous increases in the proportion of SAAP clients receiving casework services. Data also indicate improved access to social housing for those in greatest need, with an additional 1,363 households housed in 2009-10 compared to 2008-09.

Feedback from jurisdictions and stakeholders

Feedback from stakeholders, including through the Working Group's consultations⁹, indicates that the NPAH is seen as a useful mechanism for delivering a range of new programs and services that can be tailored to respond to particular local needs and challenges and to address key service gaps.

Overall, this flexibility was viewed as a positive aspect of the NPAH. However, several stakeholders commented on the challenges of implementing diverse approaches; some are more successful than others and there are variations at service level. Additionally, stakeholders raised the potential for broader implementation of successful strategies, for example to address domestic violence and exits from care, and commented that strategies to address domestic violence, in particular, did not necessarily receive investment commensurate with their contribution to reducing homelessness.

Many jurisdictions and stakeholders have noted that the NPAH has led to improved collaboration between service providers and government agencies, as well as improved coordination among government agencies.

Planning has also been important, particularly the use of jurisdictions' Implementation Plans and their continual improvement through an annual review process, and the development by some jurisdictions of state and regional homelessness plans to facilitate a better connected service system.

Several stakeholders considered that through the NPAH, the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments have demonstrated a commitment to reducing homelessness. This appears to have been effective in raising the profile of homelessness in mainstream services and the wider community and contributing to the overall effort to address homelessness.

⁹ Further details of the consultation process and those consulted are at Appendix 4

The increased access to social housing associated with the completion of stock under the Stimulus Plan was identified by a number of stakeholders as a significant factor contributing to progress against the NPAH outcomes.

Improving ability to assess progress against outcomes

While there is evidence of progress against some of the NPAH outcomes, it should be noted that the NPAH is only one part of a complex service system and it is difficult to attribute causality for progress against outcomes, due to the concurrent effects of other initiatives which affect people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Furthermore, while many funded projects may have been designed using evidence-based approaches and drawing on relevant research, there was no formal evaluative material available to the Working Group at the time of the review that would indicate that projects funded under the NPAH were reducing homelessness.

The focus on homelessness by the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments has stimulated a range of improvements in the data associated with homelessness. A number of initiatives are underway that will improve the range and quality of relevant data to monitor progress against outcomes in the future, including:

- the development of the new national Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) data collection. This began on 1 July 2011 and SHS data will be available from October 2012;
- continuing work by the ABS to review the assumptions underlying the interpretation of Census data to produce estimates of homelessness, in consultation with a Homelessness Statistics Reference Group;
- work by the ABS to explore whether Centrelink data can be used to provide an indication of changes in the homeless population between Censuses;
- evaluations by a number of jurisdictions of NPAH initiatives; and
- research projects funded under the National Homelessness Research Strategy¹⁰.

These initiatives represent an important contribution to assessing achievements on the homelessness population indicators and other indicators on a national basis.

The difficulty in resolving issues of contribution and attribution underlines the importance of ongoing investigation. Ongoing evaluative work by governments and the not-for-profit sector into the future will assist in assessing the value of continuing investment in this area.

Further examinations of progress against outcomes in 2012 and 2013 would be timely, given the need to consider in 2012 whether, and in what form, specific

¹⁰ http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/Pages/national_homelessness_research.aspx

investment for homelessness should be continued, and in 2013 to consider final achievements against the NPAH 2013 benchmarks. An examination in 2012 could utilise the 2011 Census data, which will become available in 2012, in addition to the new SHS data collection. These reviews could be undertaken by the Homelessness Advisory Committee supporting the Select Council on Homelessness, for the Select Council, which has been established in part to drive the effective implementation of the reform agenda for homelessness under the NPAH.

1.4.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Select Council on Homelessness should consider whether the annual reporting arrangements that support the NPAH can be made more effective by improving reporting on outcomes, without unreasonably adding to the reporting burden of the State and Territory Governments.

Recommendation 2

The Homelessness Advisory Committee supporting the Select Council on Homelessness should report to the Select Council on progress against the revised performance framework recommended in this report in 2012 and 2013. The reports should draw on data from the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) data collection, the Census and the jurisdictions' NPAH Annual Reports and evaluations. The reports may also be copied to Treasurers, and may be taken into account by State and Territory Treasurers in any formal advice they provide to the Commonwealth Treasurer on their views regarding expiring National Partnerships.

1.5 Performance reporting framework – findings and recommendations

1.5.1 Findings

The Working Group's analysis identified two broad categories of indicators to assess performance: broad indicators of population change reliant on Census data and indicators that rely on proxy measures relating to service users. Some performance indicators were found to suffer from data limitations and/or conceptual issues that prevented adequate measures of performance.

The Working Group considered that the indicators that related to key homeless population groups should be retained, in recognition of the impact that concerted government action for these groups is likely to make in reducing the overall level of homelessness. For these indicators, proxy performance measures, based on SHS data, were identified to be used as long-term proxy measures from 2011-12, since whole-of-population data for most indicators are not expected to be available during the life of the NPAH.

To improve the accuracy of reporting the real changes over time, the Working Group considered that all performance indicators should be expressed in terms of proportion, rather than number, and differences in expressions should be standardised, including removing references to increases or reductions in the performance indicator descriptor.

In addition, the Working Group found that, wherever possible, indicators should be disaggregated by Indigenous status and disability, as well as age and gender.

The Working Group notes that the revised framework depends largely on proxy measures for most indicators, drawing on data about users of specialist homelessness services. However, given the essential difficulty of measuring homelessness, the long lead times for developing data and the limited period of time before the NPAH concludes, the Working Group did not consider that significant investment in additional data sets for the purposes of this agreement was warranted or feasible.

1.5.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 3

Performance indicators should be disaggregated by Indigenous status and disability, as well as age and gender, wherever possible.

Recommendation 4

The following Performance Indicators (PIs) in the current Performance Reporting Framework of the NPAH should be revised to read as follows:

- PI 3 – *The proportion of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence.*
- PI 4 – *The proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing.*
- PI 5 – *The proportion of people in social housing and private rental who are supported to maintain or secure sustainable housing.*
- PI 7 – *The proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, school or work.*
- PI 9 – *The proportion of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive case management.*

Recommendation 5

Performance Indicators (PI) 8 (*Number of children (under 12 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are provided with additional support to maintain contact with their school*), PI 10 (*Number of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are provided with legal services*) and PI 11 (*Number of staff of specialist homelessness services provided with formal training and development opportunities*) should be removed from the Performance Reporting Framework of the NPAH.¹¹

¹¹ There is limited prospect of obtaining data to allow PI 8 to be measured during the life of the NPAH; while PIs 10 and 11 relate to important matters, they are not useful measures of progress against the outcomes of the NPAH

Recommendation 6

In recognition of the importance of addressing Indigenous homelessness, the following Performance Indicators should be added to the Performance Reporting Framework of the NPAH:

- The proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless; and
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping).

Recommendation 7

The framework in the table below, including performance measures and benchmarks should be adopted in the NPAH.¹²

Table 1.1 – Recommended revised performance reporting framework

Revised Number	Performance Indicator	Performance Measure	Baseline/ Data Source	Performance Benchmark
PI 1	Proportion of Australians who are homeless	Proportion of Australians who are homeless	2006 Census* (baseline)/ 2011 Census	7 per cent reduction in the number of homeless Australians by 2013.
PI 2	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless	2006 Census * (baseline)/ 2011 Census	33.3 per cent reduction in the number of Indigenous homeless Australians by 2013.
PI 3	Proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping).	Proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)	2006 Census * (baseline)/ 2011 Census	25 per cent reduction in the number of rough sleepers by 2013.
PI 4	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping).	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)	2006 Census * (baseline)/ 2011 Census	Preferred direction: decrease
PI 5	Proportion of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence	Proportion of clients accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing following family violence	2011-12 to 2012-13 /SHS**	Preferred direction: increase.
PI 6	Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing	Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings accessing specialist homelessness services who secure sustainable housing	2011-12 to 2012-13 /SHS**	Preferred direction: increase.

¹² The rationale for the recommended PIs, performance measures and benchmarks is detailed in Chapter 5 of this report.

PI 7	Proportion of people in social housing and private rental who are supported to maintain or secure sustainable housing	Proportion of people in social housing and private rental and accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing	2011-12 to 2012-13/ SHS**	Preferred direction: increase.
PI 8	Proportion of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness	Proportion of people accessing specialist homelessness services who experience repeat periods of homelessness	2007-08 SAAP (baseline)/ 2008-09 to 2010-11 SAAP; 2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS**	25 per cent reduction in the number of people experiencing three repeat periods of homelessness at an emergency service in 12 months by 2013.
PI 9	Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, school or work	Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) accessing specialist homelessness services who get support to access education, training or employment services	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS**	Preferred direction: increase.
PI 10	Proportion of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive case management	Proportion of specialist homelessness services case managed clients with goals achieved	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS**	Preferred direction: increase.

*2006 Census data will be used for the baselines as data is not available for 2008. 2011 Census data will inform assessment of the 2013 benchmarks and may be supplemented by other available data. 2006 baselines subject to revision by the ABS.

**Data from the SHS (which replaced the SAAP National Data Collection on 1 July 2011) may not be fully comparable to data from the SAAP National Data Collection. The baseline and benchmark for PI8 was retained, noting that caveats may be applied to assist with interpretation when reporting. The remaining indicators with measures using SHS data did not have baselines or benchmarks previously and none has been specified due to the uncertainties of the change from the SAAP National Data Collection to SHS.

Recommendation 8

COAG to note the baselines for PIs 1- 4 will change following the publication by the ABS of revised estimates of the 2006 homeless population¹³.

Recommendation 9

In light of the findings of this review, there should be no substantial changes to the NPAH.

1.6 Structure of the Report

This report comprises five chapters. Chapter 2 provides further background and context for the commissioning of the report, including information on the NPAH and where the agreement fits in the context of the COAG HoTs Review and the role of the COAG Reform Council (CRC).

Chapter 3 reports on progress to date against the stated outcomes of the NPAH. It also examines the NPAH's contributions to these outcomes and lessons learnt.

¹³ ABS, *Discussion Paper: Methodological Review of Counting the Homeless, 2006* [cat. no. 2050.55.001].

Chapter 4 examines factors outside the NPAH which may have contributed to NPAH outcomes, including national investment outside the NPAH and economic and social factors that may have contributed to changes in homelessness over the life of the NPAH. Findings from consultations with stakeholders are used to provide further insight.

Chapter 5 includes an analysis of the NPAH's 11 performance indicators using the HoTs conceptual framework¹⁴ and an assessment of the conceptual and data robustness of each indicator and the role that each indicator plays in measuring the targets of the NPAH. The recommendations of the CRC's *National Partnership Agreement: Early Assessment of Progress*¹⁵ are addressed, as well as the relative costs and benefits of two options for revising the performance reporting framework. A revised performance framework for the NPAH is proposed.

¹⁴http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/performance_reporting/conceptual_framework_performance_reporting_feb_11.pdf

¹⁵ The Executive Summary of the report is provided at Appendix 3

Chapter 2

2 BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

2.1 The broader context

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (the NPAH) was agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in November 2008 and commenced in January 2009. It was formulated as one of several Commonwealth/State agreements agreed by COAG in late 2008 that highlighted the importance of addressing homelessness:

- the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) includes the outcome that people who are homelessness or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion; and
- the National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing (NPASH) aimed to increase the supply of social housing and to contribute to a reduction in homelessness and improved outcomes for homeless and Indigenous Australians.

As well, the Social Housing Initiative (SHI), a component of the Commonwealth's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (the Stimulus Plan)¹⁶, agreed by COAG in February 2009, includes the objective of providing opportunities for homeless people to obtain secure accommodation.

At the same time, the Commonwealth signalled its commitment to reducing homelessness through a Green Paper and then a White Paper on Homelessness: *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness (The Road Home)*, released in December 2008. The State and Territory Governments also developed strategies to better address homelessness, including through state and territory and regional homelessness plans.

2.2 The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

The NPAH acknowledged that addressing homelessness will require action around prevention, early intervention and breaking the cycle of homelessness through a better connected service system. The State and Territory Governments agreed to match the Commonwealth's funding contribution. Further detail of funding and key strategies and reforms is provided in Chapter 3.

¹⁶ <http://www.economicstimulusplan.gov.au/housing/pages/default.aspx>

The NPAH is designed to contribute to the following four outcomes:

1. Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough.
2. Fewer people will become homeless more than once.
3. People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation.
4. People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing.

The NPAH recognises that a reduction in homelessness will require targeting rough sleepers; people experiencing homelessness more than once; people escaping violence, especially women and children; children and young people, including those exiting care and protection; Indigenous people; and people exiting social housing and institutional care.¹⁷

The NPAH performance benchmarks and indicators for overall national performance are set out in Appendix 2 of this report.

2.3 The Heads of Treasuries (HoTs) Review

In December 2009, COAG requested HoTs to undertake a review of agreements under the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) framework for federal financial relations – National Agreements, National Partnerships and Implementation Plans. In considering the effectiveness of the performance frameworks of the existing agreements, the HoTs Review¹⁸ identified there were widespread issues, which largely fell into two broad categories – data limitations and conceptual inadequacy.

The review noted that data limitations can include data being of poor quality, unreliable or infrequent, not comparable over time or between jurisdictions or unable to be sufficiently disaggregated by Indigenous or socio-economic status. It recommended that action needs to be taken to address indicators with data limitations where the limitations means that it is not possible to reliably use the indicator to assess progress against the outcomes of the agreement.

In relation to conceptual adequacy, the HoTs Review concluded that to be useful measures of the outcomes of the agreement, performance indicators require clear and logical links to the outcomes, which should be evident to the general public. In addition, a performance indicator must be able to identify whether real changes in

¹⁷ NPAH, paragraph 4.

¹⁸ Heads of Treasuries, Report of the Review of National Agreements, National Partnerships and Implementation Plans under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations, December 2010, unpublished

the related outcome over time have occurred. It should also be clear which direction of change in an indicator indicates progress.

2.4 Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

At its meeting of 13 February 2011, COAG agreed that the underlying reform principles of the IGA on Federal Financial Relations continue to provide a strong foundation for progressing COAG's agreed reform agenda and for achieving better policy and service delivery outcomes for all Australians.

However, COAG noted that the HoTs review and the COAG Reform Council (CRC) reports¹⁹ had identified significant issues with performance reporting in the National Agreements and National Partnership Agreements that sit under the IGA. COAG agreed that a Steering Group, led by senior officials from First Ministers' departments and Treasuries, should review the performance reporting frameworks underpinning the National Agreements and the National Partnership on Homelessness (NPAH). COAG also agreed that the mid-term review of the NPAH, involving a review of progress made by the parties in respect of achieving the agreed outcomes and the identification of any issues with the agreement, should be brought forward and conducted in conjunction with the review of the performance reporting framework.

The HoTs Review and CRC Recommendations Implementation Steering Group (the Steering Group) was created to give effect to this decision. The Steering Group established working groups, comprising senior officials from First Ministers' departments, Treasuries and relevant portfolio agencies, to undertake the reviews of the individual agreements.

The NPAH Review commenced in May 2011. Under the terms of reference provided by the Steering Group²⁰, the broad objectives of the review were to:

- provide an assessment of progress towards the achievement of the outcomes of the agreement;
- address the performance reporting issues identified by the HoTs review and CRC reports; and
- review the NPAH performance framework, using the conceptual framework developed by the HoTs Review.

The report of the review of the NPAH was originally to be provided to COAG by 31 August 2011. Following agreement by COAG, the deadline for reporting was subsequently extended until November 2011, to allow for the 2010-11 State and Territory Governments' NPAH Annual Reports to be considered in the review.

¹⁹ Including the CRC report, *National Partnership Agreement: Early Assessment of Progress*, (executive summary provided at Appendix 3) and the 2008-09 baseline report on the National Affordable Housing Agreement.

²⁰ The full terms of reference are provided at Appendix 1

The NPAH Review Working Group (the Working Group) held its first meeting on 13 May 2011. The group met a total of seven times between May and November 2011 - the final meeting being held on 10 November 2011.

2.5 The COAG Reform Council

The CRC assesses and publicly reports on the performance of governments against the objectives, outcomes and indicators of National Agreements and certain National Partnership agreements. Following a request by COAG in December 2009, the CRC also provided a report to COAG in July 2010 providing an early assessment of progress under the NPAH.²¹

In its report, the CRC expressed concerns about data limitations and made a number of recommendations for changes to improve the performance reporting framework. The CRC noted that some data are collected infrequently, such as through the Census of Population and Housing (the Census) which has a five year reporting cycle. This makes it difficult to measure annual progress.

On the performance reporting framework, the CRC found that:

- the performance indicators as currently set out in the agreement—with the exception of the three population indicators that utilise data from the Census—cannot be reported against; and
- the performance reporting framework is incomplete and, despite substantial data development efforts which were underway, was likely to remain so for the life of the agreement.

²¹ CRC, *National Partnership Agreement: Early Assessment of Progress*, the executive summary of which is provided at Appendix 3

Chapter 3

3 PERFORMANCE AGAINST OUTCOMES

3.1 Overview

This chapter considers the available evidence on progress towards outcomes of the NPAH and assesses the extent to which the initiatives and strategies funded under the NPAH may have impacted on homelessness.

3.2 Assessing overall progress towards achievement of outcomes

The COAG Reform Council (CRC) report on the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness: Early Assessment of Progress*²² identified a number of key data gaps that have impacted on capacity to measure the outcomes specified in the agreement, as outlined below:

- there is a lack of longitudinal data on housing and socio-economic outcomes for homeless and at risk populations;
- the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing data (2011) and the homelessness estimates that rely on this data are not currently available to assess population indicators and progress towards interim targets; and
- the 2011 Census data do not align with the performance benchmark year of 2013.

A review by the ABS of the methodology for counting the homeless²³ has also highlighted the complexities in measuring homelessness and the impact of methodological approaches to derive estimates of homelessness, given that people enumerated in the Census cannot be directly classified as homeless (except for those accommodated in supported homeless accommodation on Census night).

A key feature of the NPAH is the level of variation across jurisdictions in relation to service models and focus of effort. While all jurisdictions agreed to implement core outputs and strategies, they were each able to develop responses tailored to meet local needs. While this is a positive feature from a program perspective, it has also created challenges in relation to the comparability of data across initiatives and jurisdictions.

However, significant work is currently occurring across government to address data gaps and to enhance data collection and the range of evidence available to assess outcomes.

²² The Executive Summary of the report is at Appendix 3

²³ ABS, *Discussion Paper: Methodological Review of Counting the Homeless, 2006* (cat. no. 2050.55.001).

Notwithstanding these gaps in direct data sources, a range of proxy measures were developed to assess effectiveness against outcomes. Whilst indicative in nature, these measures, described below, represent an important contribution to assessing and, in the future, evaluating, the contribution of the NPAH and other measures have made to addressing homelessness in Australia. Supported by qualitative feedback, including through consultations and case studies²⁴, they support the view that at this stage of the agreement's implementation, some progress is being made against the outcomes.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has developed a new national Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) data collection in conjunction with the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, which began on 1 July 2011. The new collection replaces the previous Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) data collection. The scope of the SHS collection includes specialist homelessness providers funded under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and/or the NPAH. The first SHS data will be available from October 2012.

In January 2010, Centrelink introduced a homelessness flag which supports the delivery system by alerting staff to a customer's vulnerable circumstances, and prompts the staff member to provide flexible servicing options when the person comes into contact with Centrelink. Over the first 18 months, the point-in-time count of customers with a flag steadily increased to stabilise at about 48,500 in June 2011. Over time, it is expected to become an increasingly valuable source of information on flows into and out of homelessness.

Other initiatives underway that will improve the range and quality of relevant data include:

- continuing work by the ABS to review the assumptions underlying the interpretation of Census data to produce estimates of homelessness, in consultation with a Homelessness Statistics Reference Group;
- work by ABS to explore whether Centrelink data can be used to provide an indication of changes in the homeless population between Censuses;
- research projects funded under the National Homelessness Research Strategy; and
- evaluations of key NPAH initiatives across a number of jurisdictions.

In the meantime, much of the evidence base used by the Working Group to assess the effectiveness of the NPAH to date was obtained by using relevant proxy and ancillary data and anecdotal evidence from consultations to complement the scarce direct data sources currently available.

²⁴ A number of case studies are provided in Boxes 3.1 to 3.4 below.

3.2.1 Ancillary data sources

Analysis of quantitative ancillary data suggests some improvements as a result of funded programs under the NPAH and other joint efforts of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments.

Summarised below are the findings from trend analysis of such data, sourced from the SAAP National Data Collection; capital city street counts of rough sleepers; public housing tenant and state-owned managed Indigenous housing data; and data derived from the Centrelink homelessness flag. The data does not include the whole population of homeless people or those at risk of becoming homeless.

In summary, these data suggest:

- emergency accommodation is generally meeting daily demand;
- repeat homelessness is dropping and there is a trend towards better continuity of support for emergency accommodation clients;
- there have been modest but continuous increases in the proportion of emergency accommodation clients receiving financial/employment services, personal support and case management;
- more households in greatest need were allocated public housing and sustained their tenancy for more than 12 months; and
- SAAP intervention has helped clients who are leaving social housing or private rental and are at risk of homelessness from going on to primary homelessness (rough sleeping).

A more detailed analysis of the data by outcome measure is provided below.

Outcome: Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough

Progress towards this key outcome is measured by a reduction in the total numbers of homeless people and rough sleepers over time. Complete counts have not been available in the inter-Censal years between 2006 and 2011. Trend analysis sourced from the SAAP Data Collection indicates an increase in the number of people receiving assistance (from 187,900 in 2006-07 to 219,900 in 2009-10), which could reflect increased access to support or changes in the homelessness population²⁵; an increase or decrease in the number of people supported or the rate of use of services do not necessarily indicate an increase or decrease in the number of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. On this basis, there is no direct

²⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Government-funded specialist homelessness services: SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2009-10: Australia*, pp 5-6. The estimated daily turn-away rate for SAAP accommodation has remained steady over this period at between two and three per cent.

evidence available to assess if progress has been made in reducing the numbers of homeless people and rough sleepers.

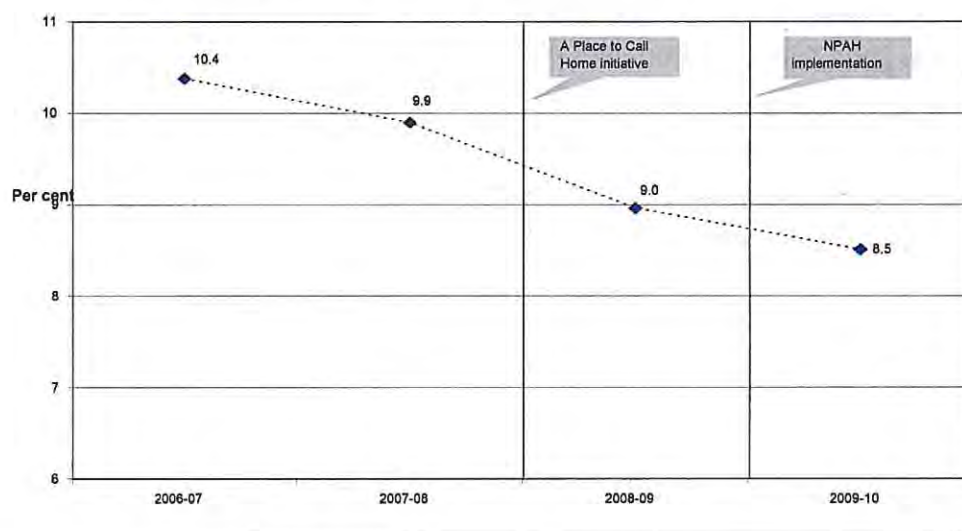
However, some information on the number of homeless people available in the period since the 2006 Census of Population and Housing (the Census) can be derived from informal surveys of rough sleepers. Over recent years, the local councils of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, and the Government of South Australia have been conducting regular street counts of rough sleepers which indicate reductions in the number of rough sleepers in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Adelaide. While these surveys do not provide robust data, they do give a useful snapshot of homelessness in capital cities at a point in time. It is also important to note that each survey's methodology may differ, meaning the data are not comparable between jurisdictions.

Outcome: Fewer people will become homeless more than once

No direct data are available to measure the number of people in the total population experiencing repeat homelessness and data for the NPAH measure of clients requiring three or more support periods in a 12 month period were unable to be derived in time for this report. The COAG Reform Council (CRC) has reported a proxy measure for the NAHA, using the proportion of clients of a SAAP agency who were identified by an agency worker as needing accommodation support more than once in a 12-month period. A possible limitation of this is that it only captures those people who accessed SAAP services and the ability to identify repeat need is likely to be influenced by the availability and nature of the services provided within a jurisdiction. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to expect the experience of SAAP clients could reflect any significant increase/decrease in repeat homelessness in the total population.

The trend in the NAHA proxy measure from 2006-07 to 2009-10 shows encouraging progress towards achieving this outcome, with repeat homelessness dropping from 10.4 per cent of clients and children with an identified accommodation need in 2006-07 to 8.5 per cent in 2009-10 (see Figure 4) from around 19,500 to 18,700 people. Although this is a relative measure using limited data, it does indicate a trend towards better support for SAAP clients.

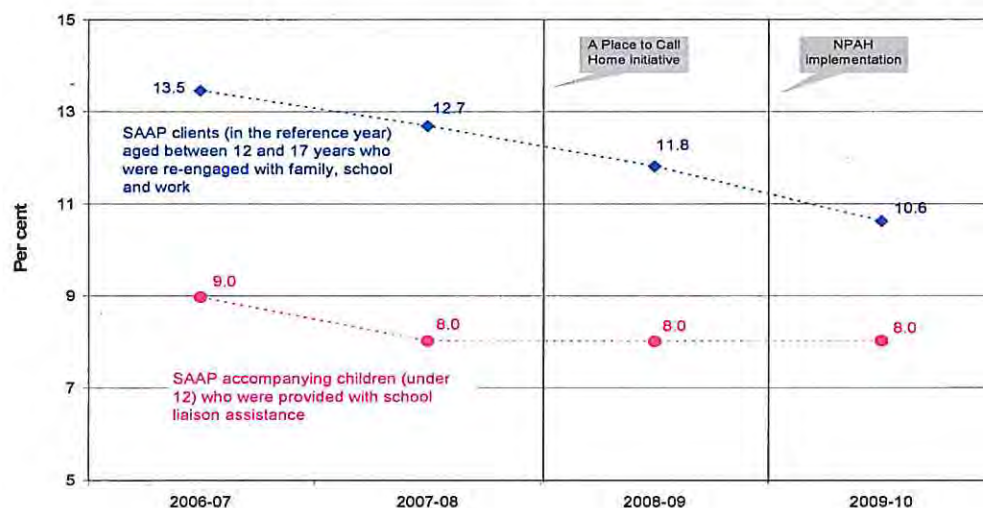
Figure 3.1 Trends in per cent of SAAP clients (and accompanying children) who experienced repeat periods of homelessness



Outcome: People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation

No direct data are available to directly assess connections with families and communities and it is not possible to draw any conclusions from the relevant data. However, some insight into this outcome is provided by SAAP proxy measures (see Figure 3.2). For clients aged 12 to 17, the level of re-engagement with family, school and work has declined from 13.5 per cent in 2006-07 to 10.6 per cent in 2009-10. The percentage of accompanying children under 12 who were provided with school liaison assistance declined from 9.0 per cent in 2006-07 to remain stable at 8.0 per cent for the following three years. What is missing from these data is the level of need for re-engagement or liaison, so a declining level of service provision may reflect a declining level of need or an increasing level of unmet need.

Figure 3.2: Trends in per cent of SAAP clients (aged 12-17) and accompanying children (under 12)

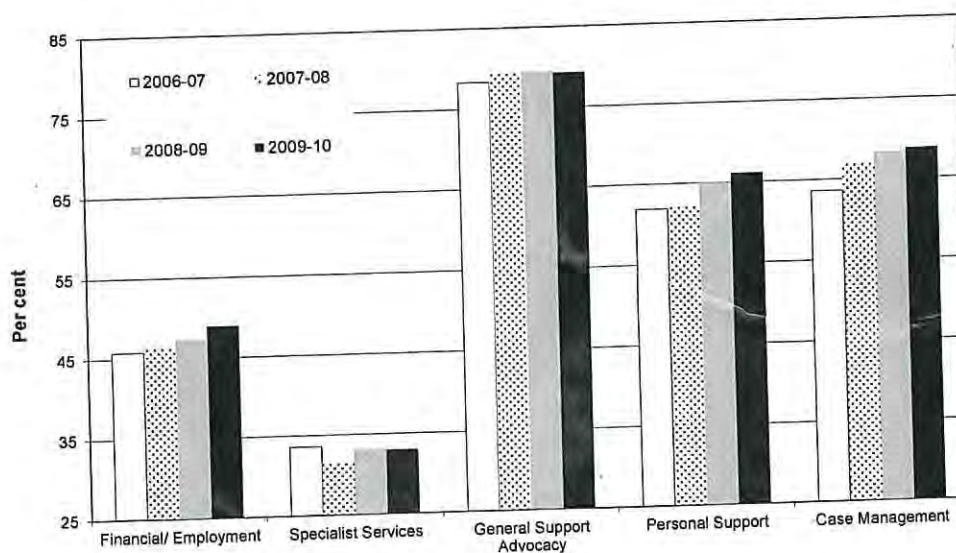


However there are positive data about employment and education outcomes. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) reports that there has been improvement in employment outcomes for the most disadvantaged homeless job seekers since current Jobs Services Australia (JSA) arrangements were introduced in 2009. In the year ending June 2011, over 26 per cent of Stream 4 homeless job seekers²⁶ achieved an employment outcome, compared to around 13 per cent of homeless job seekers under the former Personal Support Programme (PSP) in the year ending September 2009. As well, since the commencement of the Youth Connections program in January 2010 and to June 2011, over 6,000 young people who were assessed as being homeless or having unstable living arrangements have received assistance and 44 per cent of these were re-engaged with education, training or employment.

Outcome: People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing

SAAP data indicate that there have been modest but continuous increases in the proportion of SAAP clients receiving financial/employment services, personal support and case management, as shown in Figure 3.3, pointing to one segment of the population receiving improved access to services. In 2009-10, 68.7 per cent of SAAP clients received case management assistance, thus allowing better identification of their needs and more appropriate service provision.

Figure 3.3: Trends in per cent of SAAP clients provided with financial/employment services, specialist services, general support/advocacy, personal support and case management



Source: FaHCSIA's analysis of SAAP client data

²⁶ Job seekers classified in Stream 4 are for the most highly disadvantaged job seekers with severe non-vocational barriers

Consultations held by the Working Group indicated that the Social Housing Initiative funded in 2009-10 under the Nation Building and Economic Stimulus Plan (the Stimulus Plan) was also a significant factor in improving access to social housing.

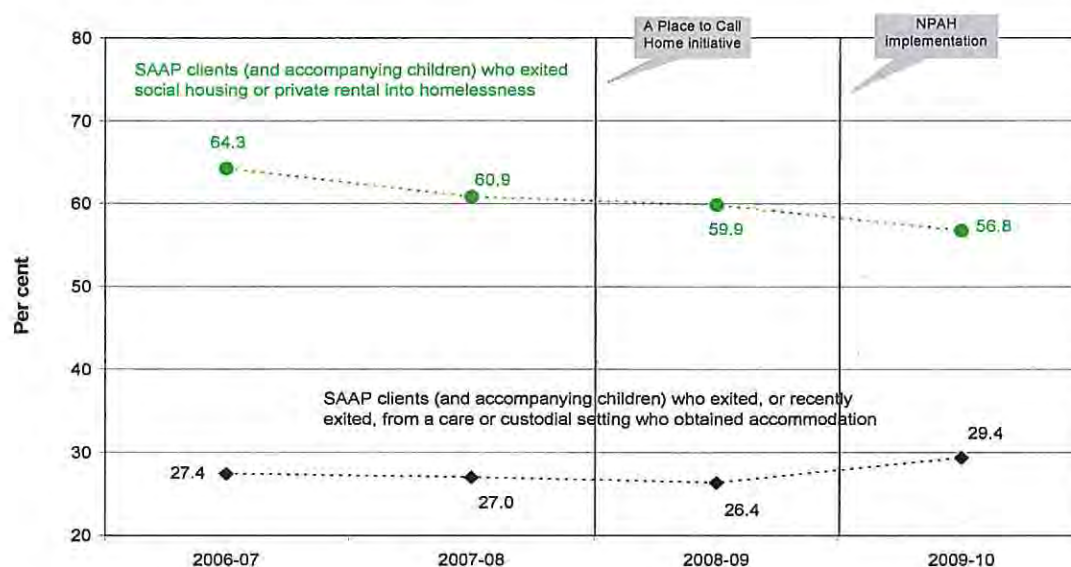
Data on two proxy measures for one of the outputs of the NAHA: 'People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are assisted to secure and sustain their tenancies' (reported by the CRC) show progress towards the access to housing component of this outcome.

In 2009-10:

- 15,070 households in greatest need (a proxy measure for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness) were allocated public housing and 8,103 were allocated community housing. This was an increase of 10.1 per cent for public housing and 9.1 per cent for community housing compared to 2008-09; and
- 11,656 households in greatest need that were allocated public housing had sustained their tenancies for 12 months or more. This was an increase of 12.7 per cent compared to 2008-09.

The percentage of SAAP clients (and accompanying children) who exited social housing or private rental into homelessness has declined steadily from 64.3 per cent in 2006-07 to 56.8 per cent in 2009-10 (see Figure 3.4). Although the numbers of SAAP clients increased overall, this decline could suggest that SAAP intervention has become more effective in helping those clients who are leaving social housing or private rental who are at risk becoming homeless.

Figure 3.4: Trends in per cent of SAAP clients (and accompanying children) who exited social housing or private rental into homelessness



3.3 Impacts of the NPAH

3.3.1 Outputs and reforms under the NPAH

The NPAH provides for direct investment of \$1.1 billion to expand existing efforts or invest in new activities to achieve the NPAH outcomes, as well as encouraging the implementation of significant reforms. Underpinning the NPAH is the recognition that service system reform is required to produce a more effective, responsive and targeted service system that will deliver better client outcomes.

Four core outputs are funded to achieve the NPAH outcomes:

1. Implementation of A Place to Call Home initiative.
2. 'Street to home' initiatives for people who are chronically homeless or rough sleeping.
3. Support for private and public tenants to help sustain their tenancies.
4. Assistance for people leaving child protection services, correctional or health facilities to access and maintain stable, affordable housing.

The State and Territory Governments are also able to fund twelve additional outputs according to the priorities of the particular jurisdiction. Appendix 5 provides a detailed analysis of the programs funded under the NPAH and assistance provided under each output. Overall, over 180 initiatives were implemented in 2010-11, with assistance provided to clients on over 170,000 occasions. Service targets were exceeded for the majority of outputs (13 out of 16 outputs) in 2010-11.

Reform effort under the NPAH is focused around three key strategies:

1. Prevention and early intervention: more effort is required to intervene early to stop people from becoming homeless.
2. Breaking the cycle of homelessness: investment is required in services that can help people who are homeless to get back on their feet, find stable accommodation and, wherever possible, obtain employment.
3. A better connected service system: reforms to the service system need to build more connected, integrated and responsive services which achieve sustainable housing, and improve economic and social participation of those at risk of homelessness.

3.3.2 Contribution to outcomes under the NPAH

The NPAH provides that the State and Territory Governments will each provide a detailed annual report (the Annual Reports) to the Commonwealth on the outputs, performance indicators and timelines detailed in their implementation plans. The Working Group considered the jurisdictions' 2010-11 Annual Reports as key inputs

into this review. Indeed, the timeline for the review was extended to allow these reports to be considered.

Consistent with the NPAH requirements, the Annual Reports do not directly report against the NPAH outcomes or performance indicators. However, the Working Group considered there would be value in considering whether future annual reporting should include a high-level summary of progress against outcomes. In addition, mechanisms for assessing and reporting progress against outcomes should be considered at the development phase of any future agreement following the NPAH.

Recommendation 1 – The Select Council on Homelessness should consider whether the annual reporting arrangements that support the NPAH can be made more effective by improving the reporting of outcomes, without unreasonably adding to the reporting burden of the State and Territory Governments.

To provide a broader perspective, the Working Group also consulted key advisory groups, peak bodies and individuals with expertise in homelessness. Eighteen separate consultations were undertaken, with organisations and individuals from all states and territories represented, including national and state bodies and advisory groups. Through these consultations, the Working Group heard the views of more than 100 people, including service providers and some individuals with first hand experience of homelessness.

Participants spoke about homelessness issues in general as well as providing their views on specific programs, initiatives and strategies under the NPAH. While some of the feedback was consistent across most groups consulted, there were also some contradictory views and particular opinions or comments were raised by only one or two of the groups. More information about the structure of the consultations, the groups consulted and the views expressed can be found at Appendix 4.

Outcome 1: Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough

The NPAH recognises that more effort is required to intervene early to stop people becoming homeless and/or to lessen the impact of homelessness. Jurisdictions have provided a significant focus on preventing homelessness and rough sleeping (see Box 3.1). The Working Group's consultations also highlighted specialist or intensive tenancy support as being particularly effective in preventing people at risk of becoming homeless.

Box 3.1

Case studies – outcome 1

- In November 2010, the Australian Capital Territory established a Supportive Sustaining Tenancy Service, which has a strong focus on early intervention by targeting people at risk of losing their housing and becoming homeless. The service provides intensive case management for clients across a range of tenures including private renters, mortgagees and tenants of public and community housing. A total of 383 at-risk tenancies were sustained after referral in 2010-11.
- Queensland has implemented a RentConnect Advisory Service to help people who are at risk of homelessness to find and secure properties in the private rental market. During 2010-11, a total of 3,860 discrete clients were assisted and 1,098 tenancies²⁷ were known to be secured by clients in the private rental market.
- Western Australia has established a Remote Rough Sleeper Assertive Outreach that is successfully operating in the remote areas of Broome and Kalgoorlie. The program recognises that large regional centres with essential services act as meeting places for Aboriginal people from different communities and language groups. Assertive Outreach Workers employ a case management approach that recognises that clients require a range of accommodation options that may change with the client's needs. The program complements other programs assisting homeless people, including rough sleepers. A total of 65 primary clients were assisted during 2010-11, and 98 people in all benefited from the initiative.
- The Northern Territory announced the Alice Springs Transformation Plan on 2 May 2009, which aims to expand social support services to reduce homelessness in Alice Springs and deliver housing and infrastructure upgrades in town camps. Territory and Commonwealth governments are working in partnership with the corporate and community sectors, particularly Aboriginal organisations, to achieve the transformation and deliver sustainable improvements in service delivery. A key NPAH initiative has been the establishment of the Apmere Mwerre Accommodation Park. With a capacity to accommodate 150 visitors, Apmere Mwerre is helping to reduce overcrowding in town camps and provides a safe place for people from bush to stay when visiting Alice Springs. The facility is staffed 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.
- NSW has established an early intervention tenancy program in the Hunter region which uses a brokerage model to support families and individuals who are at risk of homelessness and need assistance in maintaining a tenancy. Support includes financial counselling and assistance; linkages to mainstream and health services, including mental health and drug and alcohol services. The project is based on a principle of service integration as well as promoting a shift from crisis to early intervention approaches. In 2010/11 this project successfully assisted 21 households to sustain their tenancy and prevent eviction, including 5 Aboriginal households.

Outcome 2: Fewer People will become homeless more than once

Jurisdictions have implemented a number of initiatives that target people who are: regular rough sleepers; repeatedly homeless; living with a high risk of homelessness; disempowered due to mental illness; and unaccompanied children. Some examples are provided in Box 3.2 below. 'Housing First' approaches, which focus on achieving housing as a primary goal were identified in some consultations as being particularly successful, although it was also recognised that for some clients, such as vulnerable young people, this approach may need higher levels of support.

²⁷ Data on tenancy outcomes is not available for all clients

Box 3.2

Case studies – outcome 2

- Queensland has implemented a Street to Home initiative, which aims to support people who are sleeping rough or experiencing chronic homelessness to move into stable, long-term housing. Support also focuses on achieving long-term lifestyle changes to enable engagement with community, education or employment where appropriate. Key principles of service delivery include:
 - undertaking assertive outreach to identify and support people who are rough sleeping and people experiencing chronic homelessness where they are (i.e. parks, squats, shelters)
 - using a 'housing first' approach to work with the client to move from rough sleeping or chronic homelessness into appropriate stable housing
 - providing intensive case coordination to assist the client to remain in long-term stable housing and link clients with ongoing support as appropriate
 - linking clients with other ongoing support as appropriate.

A total of 818 people were assisted in 2010-11 across 4 sites. The Street to Home Initiative has introduced a number of innovations and reforms in the housing and homelessness system to assist in improving the outcomes of people sleeping rough or experiencing chronic homelessness. For example, the 50 Lives 50 Homes campaign aims to identify and house the 50 most vulnerable people in inner Brisbane and to raise public awareness. As of May 2011, 56 people have been provided with accommodation. The campaign is now working with the next 50 clients and will continue to focus on housing rough sleepers. The Department of Communities worked with the campaign to ensure quick access to social housing.

- Tasmania has implemented two initiatives (the Stay and KEYS initiatives) that work together to provide an intensive, holistic and long-term response to assist clients to sustain their tenancies at key transition points when they are at significant risk of homelessness. Target groups include young people leaving care and protection or youth justice; adults leaving correctional and health facilities; and people experiencing multiple episodes or extended periods of homelessness. During 2010-11, 265 referrals were received by the Stay service, with 98 clients receiving casework support and 82 clients residing in KEYS properties.
- Five of the new NPAH programs in Western Australia involve assisting people who are homeless to find appropriate long term housing, with support provided to ensure the tenancy is sustainable in the long term. This includes people who are leaving care, mental health services or correctional facilities and people with drug and alcohol issues. This housing is sourced through the Department of Housing's existing stock allocations and through new properties provided through the Social Housing and National Building and Job Plan National Partnership. Clients engage in intensive case management and are supported to access relevant mainstream services, such as employment services, financial counselling, education and training, domestic violence services, outreach services and advocacy. They are also assisted to re-engage with their families where appropriate and to become active members of the community. Brokerage payments allow for individual packages of support to ensure targeted and responsive services for clients. In the financial year 2010-11, 994 clients were assisted and 1,626 in all benefitted from the five programs.

Outcome 3: People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation

Several jurisdictions have implemented initiatives that link access to accommodation with support to improve education, training and employment outcomes. A number of consultations indicated that initiatives which combined access to training,

education and employment with housing are particularly likely to be successful in assisting young people to overcome disadvantage and secure sustainable housing.

Box 3.3

Case studies – outcome 3

- The first Victorian Foyer model opened in February 2011 in Ballarat Karrung, providing 17 one and two bedroom self-contained units with communal living, kitchen and training space. The initiative is providing integrated housing, education, employment and training and life skills support on site. Two units at Karrung are for young people transitioning from care orders or guardianship orders who need support to engage in education, employment and training. In the first five months of operation, 20 young people were supported at Karrung. In addition to accommodation services, outreach support has assisted 20 young people to complete accredited training courses and 80 young people to attend skill development workshops.
- The Australian Capital Territory has implemented the Youth Integrated Education and Accommodation Program aimed at supporting young people who have experienced or been at risk of homelessness. By providing high quality and affordable housing within a supportive environment, the program is able to link young people with education, training and employment opportunities. Young people engaged in the program also have the opportunity to participate in mentoring and life skills activities, helping to build supportive relationships and prepare for independent living. The program has already experienced positive outcomes for young people involved. A total of 23 young people were accommodated during 2010-11 and 23 young people were engaged in employment, training or work.
- NSW has established a Youth Hub Project on a Foyer model with Outreach which provides support to 45 young people annually, delivering housing and support to target groups varying from low to high needs. Some young people live on-site while others receive outreach support services. A key focus of the project is to assist clients, aged between 16-25 years, with training, education, living skills and employment supports. This project has a specific component that works with young people exiting juvenile detention and facilitates their move to long term housing with support. This project is one of 14 NSW initiatives that prioritise young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, which assisted 757 young people in 2010/11.

Outcome 4: People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing

The NPAH notes that reforms are required to build more connected, integrated and responsive services. Improved linkages between specialist homelessness services and mainstream services will: assist clients to navigate through complex service systems and achieve better outcomes; reduce duplication of effort; and facilitate the transition from temporary accommodation to stable housing. The case studies in Box 3. 4 below illustrate effort to help ensure that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are supported by quality services and have improved access to sustainable housing.

Box 3.4

Case studies – outcome 4

- New South Wales has established a Rural Interagency Project that is using service integration to improve client outcomes in the Riverina/Murray and New England regions. The project facilitates access to social housing and provides intensive support packages for young people, single adults and families who are homeless, sleeping rough or experiencing complex issues. Brokerage funds are used to purchase case management, specialised support services and material items, such as furniture and financial aid. Coordination Groups (comprising government and NGOs) have been established to support inter-agency case management with agreed referral processes and case management protocols. During 2010-11 the two projects supported a total of 166 clients. Of these clients, 132 were housed and 139 were able to sustain their tenancies.
- Tasmania is implementing a Service Coordination and Improvement Program (SCIP) that will underpin significant changes to the social housing service system. Its primary focus is on: redesigning access and entry to Tasmania's social housing service system so it is easier for people to use and more efficient in its operations; improving service coordination and engagement of mainstream services, to streamline access to housing and support.
- Queensland is implementing Homelessness Community Action Plans in seven locations across the state. The aim is to produce locally-owned plans to guide the activity of human service providers, all tiers of government, the private sector, philanthropic organisations and volunteer groups, in their efforts to reduce homelessness. Community consultation forums were held across the 7 locations attracting over 400 participants from government and non-government organisations. Local implementation and leadership groups (drawing together government and non-government stakeholders) have collaborated to produce draft Homelessness Community Action Plans, with the implementation of identified actions commencing in late 2011.
- The ACT implemented a Central Intake Service for Homelessness Services (First Point) which became fully operational in November 2010. The service is auspiced by Connections ACT and co-located with Housing ACT's Central Access Point (CAP). First Point provides placement into homelessness and housing support services and facilitates access to other relevant services as required. It streamlines service entry points into the homelessness service system, ensuring that clients do not have to negotiate multiple agencies to access services. During 2010-11 a total of 2626 people contacted First Point and received a service response; 701 people were referred to accommodation; and 1590 people received support services.
- South Australia has undertaken substantial development work on a new, purpose designed, web-based case management and data collection system (Homeless to Home – H2H) to assist in information sharing and the case management of clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Full implementation occurred in July 2011. The new system facilitates improved access to services and reduces the need for clients to retell their stories. It will also enhance reporting at a jurisdictional level and is linked with the Specialist Homelessness Service Collection managed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
- The Australian Government is working to drive service integration and improvements across Commonwealth agencies. The Homelessness Delivery Review Board (HDRB) was established in December 2009 to monitor the implementation and progress of the reforms set out in the White Paper on Homelessness, *The Road Home*. The HDRB is comprised of Deputy Secretary level representatives from relevant Commonwealth departments. The Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness has also been established as a key national governance body overseeing homelessness reforms and the targets set out in both the White Paper and the NPAH. The Council has taken a strategic approach to the homelessness reform agenda and undertakes a detailed assessment of policy areas.

In addition to the case studies provided by jurisdictions, a majority of consultations identified one of the most positive aspects of the NPAH as being the degree to which it has increased respect for and cooperation, partnerships, engagement and communication between services and agencies. Many also considered that its national approach enabled better consistency within the sector, between providers and State and Territory and Commonwealth agencies. The development by some

State and Territory Governments of state/territory and regional homelessness action plans was seen as a positive initiative.

Consultations also confirmed the importance of access to housing, noting that the roll-out of the social housing initiative linked to the Stimulus Plan was important to the success of a number of programs. 'Housing First' was generally supported as a good approach to reducing homelessness, although some participants noted that for some groups, such as particularly vulnerable young people, the level of support was not always sufficient.

3.3.3 Homelessness services - improvements

Information from jurisdictions and consultations with stakeholders indicate that investment under the NPAH has funded assistance to homeless clients and improved coordination of services. The NPAH has generally been seen as a useful mechanism for delivering a range of new programs and services in response to different localised needs and challenges and has allowed jurisdictions to address key service gaps.

Many jurisdictions and stakeholders have noted that the NPAH has resulted in improved collaboration between service providers and government agencies, as well as improved coordination among government agencies. Despite some initial implementation issues, success has also been achieved through the use of evidence-based program development and by ensuring new programs were integrated with the existing service system.

Linking homelessness projects to additional social housing funding through the Stimulus Plan has also increased the attainment of successful outcomes, such as securing appropriate long term sustainable housing for clients.

Improved commitment from the sector and flexibility of organisations to deliver good outcomes in a timely fashion have also been valuable in progressing outcomes.

Consultations indicated that the NPAH resulted in a signalling by the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments of the importance of homelessness to their reform agenda, effectively raising the profile of homelessness in mainstream services and the wider community. The NPAH has also facilitated education of the community and key stakeholders about homelessness to engender ongoing support for homelessness initiatives.

Planning has been important, particularly the use of state and territory Implementation Plans (and their continual improvement through an annual review process) and the development by several jurisdictions of state and regional homelessness plans, to facilitate a better connected service system.

In addition, the NPAH has provided an opportunity for jurisdictions to develop and implement more contemporary and targeted models of service delivery. The NPAH

has provided the State and Territory Governments with the imprimatur to improve or reconfigure their strategies and actions to reduce homelessness and has been a useful mechanism for leveraging reform in homelessness services statewide.

This work has the potential to make a valuable contribution towards the evidence base from which longer term reform of the broader homelessness service system can be modelled, including the integration of specialist homelessness services and mainstream services. However, information on the specific outcomes of funded activities is limited. The Annual Reports do not specifically identify contributions to NPAH outcomes. Furthermore, while many funded projects may have been designed using evidence-based approaches and drawing on relevant research, there was no formal evaluative material available to the Working Group at the time of the review that would indicate that projects funded under the NPAH were reducing homelessness or to judge whether investment under the NPAH had, in some cases, substituted for previous effort. The latter was raised as an issue in one consultation.

While data from the former SAAP collection have shown some improvement in access to services in the period to June 2010, data were not available to the Working Group for 2010-11, a period in which impacts of the NPAH may have been clearer. This is because services funded under the NPAH were still being established during 2009-10 and may not have been operational for the full financial year. Data from 2010-11 and subsequent years will provide a clearer picture, given that initiatives should be well established by then.

Given the current gaps in data availability, there is a need to take further stock of progress in 2012. A number of jurisdictions have commenced evaluations of NPAH initiatives, which will provide further evidence regarding the effectiveness of new NPAH service models and whether they are making a difference in improving client outcomes. Well-designed evaluations will also provide greater methodological rigour when addressing issues such as attribution of outcomes and the longer-term impact of NPAH investments.

Further examinations of progress against outcomes in 2012 and 2013 would be timely, given the need to consider in 2012 whether, and in what form, specific investment for homelessness should be continued, and in 2013 to consider final achievements against the NPAH 2013 benchmarks.

Recommendation 2 – The Homelessness Advisory Committee supporting the Select Council on Homelessness should report to the Select Council on progress against the revised performance framework recommended in this report in 2012 and 2013. The reports should draw on data from the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) data collection, the Census and the jurisdictions' NPAH Annual Reports and evaluations. The reports may also be copied to Treasurers, and may be taken into account by State and Territory Treasurers in any formal advice they provide to the Commonwealth Treasurer on their views regarding expiring National Partnerships.

3.3.4 Homelessness services - lessons learnt

Appropriately skilled personnel

Recruiting and retaining appropriately skilled staff, particularly in non-urban areas and under current remuneration levels, has been noted by jurisdictions as a common barrier to success. This is compounded by a shortage of affordable housing for clients and staff, particularly in remote areas. Longer lead times were needed to establish new services and programs, especially those delivered by the non-government sector and in remote communities, and where clients' needs were increasingly complex.

It was suggested at some consultations that there have been instances when it would have been quicker and more effective for existing services to have delivered services, rather than establishing new services.

Opportunities have also been identified to educate and support staff, through sharing of resources developed by case managers; undertaking regional forums to identify gaps, barriers, solutions and provide information on new policy directions, research, and practice guides; and using of brokerage funds to buy in capacity. However, the latter is less successful where there is limited availability of capacity from other organisations.

Awareness and availability of related services

Consultations identified the risks associated with increasing awareness without ensuring the availability of corresponding resources to meet increased demand, especially in relation to family violence programs. In addition to services providing accommodation, stakeholders encouraged the development of programs that help people become 'safe at home' and examples were provided of models that are working well and some that are not proving effective. The value of sharing information on service models was also highlighted.

Community support

In Indigenous communities (particularly in Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia), barriers included cultural factors, such as concepts of home and homelessness, and the need for more time to develop longer term relationships, particularly where the assistance takes the form of consultation rather than direct support.

In some instances, negative community response to placement of homeless people in supported accommodation in their community led to delays with placement of tenants in appropriate properties.

The breadth and complexity associated with the reforms has resulted in mixed responses from the sector in some jurisdictions and subsequent difficulties in getting cooperation and buy-in from some organisations. Garnering commitment from

other areas, such as hospitals and mainstream services was also a barrier, given that there is already a large demand on these services and it is often easier for the services to tend to people who are compliant and seeking assistance.

Data and evaluation

Gaps in data availability and ability to measure performance were barriers to developing, monitoring, reviewing, and improving services and programs. More engagement with the university and/or non-government sector could be undertaken to further enhance research efforts, to identify the most effective services into the future.

Chapter 4

4 FACTORS OUTSIDE THE NPAH IMPACTING ON HOMELESSNESS OUTCOMES

4.1 National investment on homelessness outside the NPAH

The NPAH comprises a small, yet targeted, amount of funding compared to investment in broader ongoing National Agreements, National Partnerships and other initiatives. In assessing the factors that may have affected achievement of the NPAH targets since its commencement in 2009, it is important to look at the impacts of other mainstream programs and targeted initiatives.

4.1.1 National homelessness and/or housing initiatives

In addition to the NPAH, National Agreements and programs targeted towards housing and/or homelessness which are most likely to have affected the changes to homelessness reflected in this review are outlined below. While many of these programs were developed independently of the NPAH, others may reflect the increased priority accorded to addressing homelessness associated with the NPAH and the Commonwealth's National Approach to Reducing Homelessness, *The Road Home*.

The National Affordable Housing Agreement

The National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) aims to ensure that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing. The NAHA provides greater flexibility for the State and Territory Governments to address housing issues that are specific to their own jurisdiction and to direct funds towards the programs and services that have the greatest impact. The NAHA highlights the importance of addressing both homelessness and housing supply issues.

The National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing

The National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing (NPASH) aims to increase the supply of social housing through new construction and to contribute to a reduction in homelessness and improved outcomes for homeless and Indigenous Australians. The NPASH specifically identifies people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and Indigenous Australians as target groups for the new social housing dwellings. Commonwealth funding of \$400 million was provided to the State and Territory Governments from 2008 to 2010.

There are currently 1,960 new dwellings approved under the NPASH, including 1,781 social housing dwellings and an additional 179 affordable housing dwellings. As at 31 October 2011, over 1,900 dwellings had commenced and over 1,700 had completed construction. As at 30 September 2011, 1,478 dwellings had been

tenanted, including 56 per cent by households identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Social Housing Initiative

The Social Housing Initiative (SHI) is a component of the Commonwealth's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan and supports both the construction of new social housing and the repair and upgrade of existing homes, through the provision of \$5.6 billion over 2008-2012. The objectives of the SHI include providing increased opportunities for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to gain secure long term accommodation. This initiative was announced in early 2009, after the NPAH was agreed and represents a significant boost in funding for new social housing dwellings.

At 30 September 2011, more than 16,200 new dwellings had been completed, and 13,400 new dwellings under the initiative had been tenanted with 55 per cent allocated to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Around 80,000 existing social housing dwellings received repairs and maintenance works, including major upgrades to around 12,000 social housing dwellings that were vacant or would have become uninhabitable without this work.

By 30 June 2012, the Commonwealth expects that construction of over 19,600 new dwellings will be complete, with the assistance of the not-for-profit sector, at a total cost of \$5.2 billion.

The importance of the SHI in creating capacity to house people who are homeless and those at risk of homelessness was emphasised by participants in the consultation process, who identified this program as a significant contributor to the NPAH outcomes.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing provides \$5.5 billion over 10 years to improve housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities. Since the commencement of the NPAH, more than 800 new houses have been completed and over 3,100 houses have been rebuilt or refurbished nationally.

The investment is underpinned by property and tenancy management reforms. These include the introduction of priority allocation of housing and intensive tenancy support that helps tenants to understand and manage their responsibilities, ultimately providing more stable tenancy arrangements. The agreement aims to reduce the incidence of homelessness in remote Australia by 30 per cent by 2013 and by 50 per cent by 2018.

National Rental Affordability Scheme

The National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) is a long term, \$4.3 billion commitment by the Commonwealth Government to invest in 50,000 affordable rental homes that are rented at a minimum of 20% below market rent, with incentives provided by the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments for each dwelling for up to 10 years. The scheme was launched in July 2008 and as at 31 August 2011, there were 4,178 dwellings rented or available to rent and 20,408 reserved incentives for proposed dwellings.

4.1.2 National non-homelessness and/or housing initiatives that impact homelessness

Some national programs that are not primarily aimed at addressing homelessness, may impact on changes to homelessness, either through providing direct assistance to people who are homeless or by contributing to the early intervention and prevention goals of the NPAH. A number of programs that may have had an impact on homelessness since the start of the NPAH are outlined below.

Youth Connections – under the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions, this initiative funds providers to work with at-risk young people, including young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to help them attain Year 12 or equivalent qualifications and assist them make a successful transition through education and on to further education, training or work. Since its commencement in January 2010 and to June 2011, over 32,000 young people received support. More than 6,300 of this group were assessed as being homeless or having unstable living arrangements and 44 per cent of these young people re-engaged with education training or employment²⁸.

The National Youth Participation Requirement – COAG agreed to a National Youth Participation Requirement in 2009, which commenced on 1 January 2010, which made participation in education, training or employment compulsory for all young people until they turn 17. This was supported by an entitlement to education or training places for 15 to 24 year olds, and changes to Youth Allowance and Family Tax Benefit Part A, making education and training a precondition for these payments.

Job Services Australia (JSA) – commenced on 1 July 2009, with an increased focus on assisting the most disadvantaged job seekers, in comparison to the previous Job Network²⁹. JSA includes specialist services at 29 sites for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and provides access to an Employment Pathway Fund to assist disadvantaged job seekers, including those who are homeless.

²⁸ FaHCSIA, unpublished report

²⁹ DEEWR, Evaluation Strategy for Job Services Australia 2009-2012

Evidence from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) shows JSA is contributing to continual improvement in employment outcomes for the most disadvantaged homeless job seekers. In the year ending June 2011, over 26 per cent of Stream 4 homeless job seekers³⁰ achieved an employment outcome compared to around 13 per cent of homeless job seekers under the former Personal Support Programme (PSP) in the year ending September 2009.

Jobs Fund and Innovation Fund projects – target disadvantaged job seekers. Of the 77 Innovation Fund projects to date, six target job seekers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Within the Jobs Fund, nine projects had a specific focus on targeting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

headspace – provides a national coordinated focus on youth mental health and related drug and alcohol problems and aims to improve access to appropriate services for young people aged 12-25 years and to ensure better coordination between services. Additional funding was provided to headspace in the 2010-11 Commonwealth Budget to enable it to assist vulnerable and hard to reach young people, with homeless young people identified as a target group from December 2010 31. Further funding announced in the 2011-12 Commonwealth Budget will strengthen the capacity to assist homeless young people.³²

Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHAMs) program – provides one-on-one support through outreach services to people whose lives are severely affected by mental illness. An expanded three sites and four new sites established in 2010 have a specific focus on homeless people with a requirement that 75 per cent of participants are from this target group. Another three new sites include homeless people as part of the target group. At 30 April 2011 there were 8,469 active PHAMs participants, 11 per cent of whom identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Emergency relief – provides support to address immediate needs in times of crisis. Within the \$64.4 million provided by the Commonwealth in 2010-11, \$6.1 million over 2 years has been assigned to 23 organisations to better support clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Community legal centres – under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services, additional funds were provided to nine community legal centres for four years from 2010, to enhance access to justice for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Weekly income support payments to vulnerable Australians – weekly payment of their income support benefits became available for up to 12,000 vulnerable people

³⁰ Stream 4 caters for job seekers with the most severe barriers to employment, often multiple barriers.

³¹ 2010-11 Budget paper no.2, http://www.aph.gov.au/budget/2010-11/content/bp2/html/bp2_expense-13.htm

³² 2011-12 Budget paper no. 2, http://www.budget.gov.au/2011-12/content/bp2/html/bp2_expense-12.htm

from 29 April 2010, to assist them to better budget their income, including to meet their rent payments and to help reduce the risk of homelessness.

Regional Development Australia Fund – established to support the infrastructure needs and economic growth of Australia's regions including funding facilities that provide specialist services and accommodation to homeless people.

The *Road Home* found that 17% of SAAP clients in 2004-05 reported a mental health problem. The upcoming National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health, announced in 2011, will provide \$201.3 million to focus on stable accommodation and support; the presentation, admission and discharge planning in major hospital and emergency departments; and related support services. This focus will benefit people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and may contribute to the NPAH outcomes in its remaining period.

4.2 The changing context of the NPAH

This section looks at the economic and social context in which the NPAH has been operating to illustrate how external factors may have contributed, both positively and negatively, to changes in homelessness over the life of the NPAH so far.

4.2.1 The economic context

There are a number of economic factors affecting homelessness, including jobs supply, incomes, growth in key prices such as rents and utilities and housing affordability. In addition, there were a number of extraordinary events taking place shortly before or during the life of the agreement, including the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and a number of natural disasters, which were likely to have had an impact on homelessness.

Despite these extraordinary events, relevant key economic indicators have remained reasonably resilient with the labour market performing well (but softening over 2011) and wages growing at around trend rates, although rental prices have generally continued to outpace incomes growth.

Housing affordability and utilities prices

Housing affordability and housing stress have been affected by a range of macroeconomic factors over the past few years. These factors have at times worked in opposing directions, and have affected households differently, depending on whether they are renters, outright owners, or owner-occupiers with a mortgage.

From a mortgagor perspective, measures of housing affordability have generally eased from three years ago, in line with slightly lower mortgage interest rates. For example, the Reserve Bank of Australia's index of housing affordability improved a little from 80.3 in the September quarter 2008 to 88.2 in mid-2011, a rise of about 10 per cent.

However, mortgage arrears have increased from around 0.5 per cent of the value of outstanding home loans to 0.8 per cent over this time, with increases in all major states, particularly Queensland³³. However, the overall arrears rate in Australia remains very low by international standards, notwithstanding its increase over the past few years.³⁴

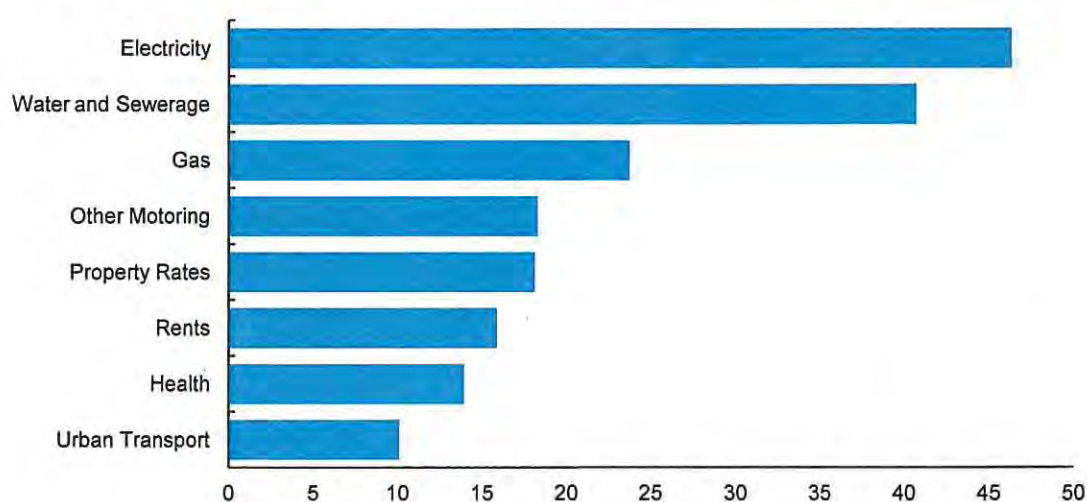
Rental affordability has continued to worsen over the period, with rents generally growing faster than average household income. The strong growth in rents reflects solid growth in underlying demand for housing in conjunction with sluggish growth in housing supply. Rents grew by an average 5 per cent per year, with most renting households devoting a larger share of their incomes to rental payments.³⁵

Ongoing strength in rent growth has seen an increase in most indicators of rental stress since 2007. According to the latest data from the HILDA survey (2009), the fraction of disposable income that renting households typically dedicate to rent payments increased from 22 per cent to 23 per cent between 2007 and 2009. The increase was largest for households in the bottom income quintile, with the median rent payment rising from 32 per cent to 37 per cent of disposable income.³⁶

In addition, households have faced strong rises in utility prices, along with strong growth in property rates and charges (Figure 4.1). Since September 2008, for example, electricity prices have risen more than 45 per cent.³⁷

Figure 4.1: Percentage Growth in Key Prices (September 2008-September 2011)

Source: ABS Catalogue Number 6401.0



³³ These increases mainly reflect an earlier cohort of home buyers that entered the market between 2004 and 2008, when lending standards were somewhat looser than they are now and when house prices were rising strongly, particularly in Queensland, Western Australia, and the Western Sydney region of New South Wales. A small contribution from natural disasters earlier this year may also be a factor in Queensland.

³⁴ Australian Prudential Regulation Authority.

³⁵ ABS Catalogue Number 6401.0 – *Consumer Price Index*.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

Employment

Since the onset of the GFC, the Australian labour market has been relatively resilient, creating over half a million jobs. In June 2009, the unemployment rate peaked at 5.9 per cent, the highest since July 2003. More recently, soft conditions outside the mining sector have seen the unemployment rate increased from its recent low of 4.9 per cent to 5.2 per cent in October 2011, with only 51,400 jobs created in the 10 months to October 2011 compared to 316,200 over the same period in 2010³⁸.

Labour force participation remained at around record highs throughout the GFC, with the participation rate peaking at 66.0 per cent in November 2010.

Wages and Prices

At the height of the GFC, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) peaked at 5 per cent through the year to the September quarter 2008, driven by increased costs of housing, transportation, financial and insurance services and food. CPI growth is now 3.5 per cent through the year to the September quarter of 2011, driven by strong seasonal rises in the price of utilities.

While the increases in CPI raise cost of living concerns and can erode real incomes of low-income workers (if growing faster than wages), pensioners and other beneficiary recipients are compensated, to some extent, for these increases. Some concerns have been expressed that those benefits indexed to the CPI, including, for example, Commonwealth Rent Assistance, may not keep pace with price rises faced by consumers in specific areas and paying private rents.³⁹

Wages growth has also outpaced inflation over the last 12 months to the September quarter 2011. The Wage Price Index (WPI) increased by 3.6 per cent through the year to the September quarter 2011 and private sector wages have recovered to increase by 3.7 per cent through the year. This is up from the recent trough of 2.6 per cent witnessed during the GFC.⁴⁰

4.2.2 The impact of natural disasters in Victoria and Queensland

Victoria

The 7 February 2009 'Black Saturday' bushfires took 173 lives and destroyed over 2,133 properties. It is estimated that almost 1,400 households lost their homes (not

³⁸ Since September 2008, the number of long term unemployed males aged 25-54 has increased from 24,900 to 36,800. This is below the aggregate long-term unemployment rate of 0.7 per cent and 1 per cent in September 2008 and September 2011 respectively.

³⁹ Benefits are indexed to either CPI or, for pensions, the higher of the CPI or the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI - which places a higher weight on those goods and services more typically incurred by aged pensioners and other transfer recipients). The PBLCI grew faster than the CPI in the past year, rising by 4.5 per cent through the year to the June quarter 2011.

⁴⁰ Wages and Prices data sourced from ABS Catalogue Number 6345.0 – *Labour Price Index* and ABS Catalogue Number 6401.0 – *Consumer Price Index*.

including holiday or second homes or residential investments). This level of destruction and displacement was an extraordinary emergency for Victoria.

On 7 February 2009, emergency accommodation was coordinated by Department of Human Services (DHS) regions, supported by housing staff. This was the first time Victoria's housing authority had been directly involved in the emergency accommodation response to a natural disaster.

Over 500 bushfire affected households were directly assisted to achieve permanent accommodation, with over 160 of these households now residing in public housing. 416 households were provided with financial assistance to secure private rental accommodation. Including public housing, caravans and units in temporary villages, 525 households were assisted with temporary housing options.

The January 2011 Victorian floods affected 26 municipalities (representing one third of Victoria's local government areas), 104 townships, more than 3,355 residential buildings and over 285 other buildings, and an estimated 7,625 people. In February 2011, those regions were again impacted as well as Gippsland and Southern Metropolitan regions. Over 700 households sought assistance after the floods from DHS in Victoria. Responses to assist displaced households with accommodation include public housing, caravans, movable units, Housing Establishment Fund grants, private rental assistance and provision of portable bathrooms.

Queensland

Between November 2010 and April 2011, Queensland was affected by a series of natural disasters. Significant flooding occurred in many areas of Queensland during late December 2010 and early January 2011. Up to 29,000 homes and businesses experienced some form of inundation and almost 7,000 people were accommodated in 74 evacuation centres. On 2 February 2011, Tropical Cyclone Yasi caused further destruction and monsoonal rains then caused further flooding impacts in regional Queensland post February 2011. With the combined impact of the floods and cyclone, all of Queensland's Local Government Areas were declared disaster affected as at March 2011.

As at 13 September 2011, 610 applications for social housing had been received from Queenslanders who reported being a victim of the floods or cyclone. People in flood affected areas were also assisted to find alternative private rental accommodation and there is agreement for an additional 123 rental properties to be made available under the Community Rent Scheme. Over 100 temporary units of accommodation were provided for use by displaced people.

The RentConnect Advisory Service was an integral part of the government and community response to addressing housing needs in disaster-affected communities in Queensland. RentConnect Officers visited disaster recovery centres to assist people in securing temporary accommodation in the private rental market. This initiative is part funded under the NPAH.

The Commonwealth also provided support to affected individuals through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Program to support, with the Queensland and the Victorian governments, reconstruction efforts and social support activities - including mental health services, housing assistance and residential housing advice.

At the height of the natural disasters, over 30,000 jobs were affected between December 2010 and February 2011 in Queensland. Employment in that state is now around pre-disaster levels⁴¹.

The impact of these natural disasters will need to be considered in assessing data from the 2011 Census and key population indicators associated with reductions in homelessness.

4.2.3 The social context

The Working Group has considered whether there have been any changes in social factors that may have affected changes to homelessness since the NPAH commenced. The Group considered changes in population numbers and characteristics; prevalence of mental health disorders; family violence and family breakdown rates; levels of social exclusion; and rates of out of home care and detention.

While the review found incremental changes, these were not of a scale to point to particular impacts on homelessness since the commencement of the NPAH. The key trends were:

- continued population growth⁴² and ageing of the population⁴³, which will have long-term pressures on demand for affordable housing;
- a long-term trend of reductions in family violence and family breakdown, which are major triggers for homelessness⁴⁴;
- increases in the number of people in prison and youth in detention over the long term, both groups at risk of homelessness after they leave custody;
- progressive increases in the proportion of Australians estimated to experience a mental disorder over their lifetime⁴⁵, although it is not clear the extent to which this reflects increase in identification and reporting - a third of people who are homeless in inner city areas are estimated as having a severe mental illness⁴⁶; and

⁴¹ Employment section sourced from ABS Catalogue Number 6202.0 – *Labour Force Survey*.

⁴² Australia to 2050: Future Challenges, January 2010 (Intergenerational Report 2010), Attorney-General's Department

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Women's Safety Survey, 1996 and Personal Safety Survey 2005.

⁴⁵ AIHW 2011. Mental health services - in brief 2011. Cat. no. HSE 113. Canberra: AIHW.

⁴⁶ *National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing*, 2007; Herrman H, Evert H, Harvey C, Gureje O, Pinzone T, Gordon I. Disability and service use among homeless people living with psychotic disorders, in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 2004; 38:965–974; Teesson M, Hodder T, Buhrich N. Psychiatric disorders in homeless men and women in inner Sydney, in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 2004; 38:162–

- since 2005, the number of children under care and protection orders has increased by 57 per cent⁴⁷ and the number of children in out of home care has increased by 51 per cent.

More details of these and other social factors relevant to homelessness are in Appendix 6.

⁴⁷ AIHW 2011. Juvenile justice in Australia 2009-10. Juvenile Justice series no. 8. Cat. No. JUV 8. Canberra: AIHW – this is for the period 30 June 2005-30 June 2010.

Chapter 5

5 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

5.1 Overview

Consistent with its Terms of Reference⁴⁸, the Working Group examined the existing performance reporting framework under the NPAH⁴⁹, seeking to address any conceptual and data issues with the existing performance indicators. A revised performance indicator framework is proposed by the Working Group. This revised framework is summarised at Table 5.1 below and the group's recommendations against each individual indicator are listed at section 5.2.

The Working Group began this process by undertaking a preliminary analysis of the 11 performance indicators in the current performance reporting framework of the NPAH using the HoTs conceptual framework. The group assessed the conceptual and data robustness of each indicator and the role that each indicator plays in measuring the targets of the NPAH.

The analysis, which drew on the work undertaken by the COAG Reform Council and the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, identified that there were a number of performance indicators that suffered from data limitations and/or conceptual issues, which limited their value as measures of performance. Overall, the preliminary assessment identified that the measures drawing on population data were conceptually sound and, while subject to some data constraints, were able to be reported against. The lower level indicators were found to be both less effective measures of the outcomes of the agreement and more affected by data constraints.

The Working Group then considered each indicator and the overall performance reporting framework in order to determine if the indicator should be retained, modified, replaced or removed.

In this context, the Working Group took account of a number of factors particular to the context of homelessness. First, the nature of homelessness means that it is very difficult to gather information on the proportion of the population that is homeless. Even with significant efforts from data agencies, there is a wide margin of uncertainty in even the best available data on the homeless population which is drawn from the Census of Population and Housing (the Census). Obtaining this data is costly, complex and labour-intensive. Further, the Census only takes place every five years and the Working Group did not consider trying to collect this information more frequently was practical.

Second, the Working Group recognised that there are particular groups in the community at especially high risk of homelessness and that one of the effective ways of

⁴⁸ Provided at Appendix 1

⁴⁹ Provided at Appendix 2

preventing and addressing homelessness is for concerted government action in this area.

In view of these limitations the Working Group, considered that a number of indicators should be retained (sometimes in a modified form or with different measures) because they were the best available measure of an outcome or because the indicator addressed an important policy area. In particular, the Working Group agreed that a number of indicators relating to key homeless population groups should be retained. For these indicators, proxy performance measures, based on the new Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) data collection, were identified to be used as proxy measures from 2011-12, since whole-of-population data are not expected to be available during the life of the NPAH for most indicators.

A number of minor changes to improve clarity and coherence of the performance reporting framework were identified. The Working Group recommends that:

- all the performance indicators should be expressed in terms of proportions; and
- differences in expressions should be standardised, including removing all references to increases or reductions in the performance indicator descriptor (for example, it is proposed the indicator, 'Increase in the number of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing' be amended to 'Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing').

The appropriateness of the current benchmarks for the indicators was also considered. In a number of cases, changes to data sources and indicators meant that it would not be meaningful to develop a benchmark within the remaining life of the agreement. Where a benchmark is not recommended for a particular indicator, the desired direction of change for the indicator is now identified and the performance and outcomes will continue to be monitored.

The Working Group also recommended that, where possible, all indicators should be disaggregated by age, gender, Indigenous status and disability. These disaggregations would assist improved reporting to monitor progress in reducing homelessness of vulnerable groups such as children, young people and the aged, to monitor progress in reducing the gap experienced by Indigenous people and addressing disadvantage experienced by those with disabilities. The group noted, however, that disability information is subject to particular limitations and consequently is likely to restrict possible reporting options.

Recommendation 3 – Performance indicators should be disaggregated by Indigenous status and disability, as well as age and gender, wherever possible.

Finally, the Working Group undertook a cost benefit analysis of options for its proposed changes to the performance indicator framework, including an assessment of costs and

benefits for further data development that would enable more frequent and detailed measurement and reporting of the homeless population.

5.2 Recommendations for revisions to the existing performance indicator (PI) framework

The Working Group proposes that in general the performance indicators be retained, despite some being subject to data limitations, to reflect policy intent and allow for future improvement. The Working Group agreed that, where appropriate, such indicators would be reported using more limited performance measures. To ensure this is transparent, the Working Group recommends the performance framework in the NPAH include performance measures alongside the performance indicators, detailing what components of the indicator will be measured. Where the whole indicator is able to be measured, the wording of the performance measure is the same as the performance indicator. Where the data are only able to measure some components of the indicator, or do not cover the whole of the population of interest to the indicator, the performance measure specifies the elements that can be measured, or the sub-population to which the data pertain.

5.2.1 Performance Indicator 1

PI 1 – The proportion of Australians who are homeless

*It is recommended that this indicator be **retained**.*

This PI is an overarching indicator which was considered to be based on relevant data covering the population that is comparable between jurisdictions. It was considered to be a reasonably effective indicator with only minor data limitations and which demonstrates strong conceptual links to the outcome 'Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough'.

The performance measure (PM) recommended for this indicator is:

PM 1 – The proportion of Australians who are homeless

It is recommended that the performance benchmark (PB) for this indicator be retained, with minor changes to the wording as follows:

PB 1 – A 7 per cent reduction in the number of homeless Australians by 2013

The Working Group noted available data do not align with the baseline (2008) and benchmark (2013) years of the NPAH, since progress against this indicator could be fully measured only at the Census data collection points of 2006 and 2011. The group noted that the use of Centrelink data is being investigated to determine whether, together with SAAP and SHS data, they can be used as a source to estimate progress for 2013.

5.2.2 Performance Indicator 2

PI 2 – The proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)

*It is recommended that this indicator be **retained**.*

This PI was considered to be based on relevant data covering the relevant population and which is comparable between jurisdictions. It was judged to be reasonably effective indicator with strong conceptual links to the outcome 'Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough'.

The performance measure (PM) recommended for this indicator is:

PM 2 – The proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness

It is recommended that the performance benchmark for this indicator be retained, with minor changes to the wording as follows:

PB 2 – A 25 per cent reduction in the number of rough sleepers by 2013

The Working Group noted available data do not align with the baseline (2008) and benchmark (2013) years of the NPAH, since progress against this indicator could be fully measured only at the Census data collection points of 2006 and 2011. The group noted that the use of Centrelink data is being investigated to determine whether, together with SAAP and SHS data collections, it can be used to enable an assessment of progress to be estimated for 2013.

5.2.3 Performance Indicator 3

PI 3 – The number of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence

Recommendation 4 – It is recommended that PI3 be revised as follows:

The proportion of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence

The PI was assessed as demonstrating weak connections with the two relevant outcomes of the agreement: 'Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough' and 'People at risk of experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'.

There were also conceptual issues with this indicator, due to its use of number rather than proportion. This makes it unclear whether an increase, for example, would represent an improvement or a decline in performance, as this would depend on factors such as population growth or decline.

Nevertheless, this PI was considered important because family violence continues to be one of the main drivers of homelessness. Escaping domestic violence is the most common reason given by people for seeking help from specialist homelessness services.

The Working Group considered that retaining the indicator in a revised form will help to keep the focus on improving performance measurement of this key driver of homelessness.

The Working Group considered that the performance measure for this indicator should focus on sustainable housing outcomes. The revised measure is a long-term proxy measure of outcomes for people who access specialist homelessness services, as data on outcomes for all homeless people who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence are not available and are not expected to become available during the life of the NPAH.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 3 – *The proportion of people accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing following family violence*

PB 3

No performance benchmark is proposed for this indicator, due to the uncertainties associated with the replacement of the SAAP National Data Collection by the SHS collection in 2011-12. The preferred direction of this indicator is for an increase.

5.2.4 Performance Indicator 4

PI 4 – **An increase in the number of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing**

Recommendation 4 – It is recommended that PI4 be **revised** as follows:

The proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing.

The indicator was assessed as demonstrating weak connections with the two relevant outcomes of the agreement: 'Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough' and 'People at risk of experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'.

There were also conceptual issues with this indicator, due to its use of number rather than proportion. Again, this makes it unclear whether an increase would represent an improvement or a decline in performance, as this would depend on factors such as population growth or decline.

Nevertheless, this PI was considered important because people leaving prison and other care arrangements are at high risk of homelessness and are a key target for early

intervention and prevention programs. Retaining the indicator will help to keep the focus on improving performance measurement of this issue.

The Working Group considered the performance measure for this indicator should focus on sustainable housing outcomes. The revised measure is a long-term proxy measure of outcomes for people who access specialist homelessness services, as data on the housing outcomes for all people who exit care and custodial settings are not available and are not expected to become available during the life of the NPAH.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 4 – *Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings accessing specialist homelessness services who secure sustainable housing*

PB 4

No performance benchmark is proposed for this indicator, due to the uncertainties associated with the change from the SAAP to the SHS data collection in 2011-12. In lieu of a specific benchmark, the preferred direction of this indicator is for an increase.

5.2.5 Performance Indicator 5

PI 5 – **Reduce the number of people existing social housing and private rental into homelessness**

Recommendation 4 – It is recommended that PI5 be revised as follows:

The proportion of people in social housing who are supported to maintain or secure sustainable housing.

The indicator was assessed as demonstrating weak connections with the two relevant outcomes of the agreement. 'Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough' and 'People at risk of experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'.

Once again, as this indicator is a number, it is unclear whether an increase would represent an improvement or a decline in performance, as this would depend on factors such as population growth or decline. Nevertheless, this PI was considered important because eviction from social housing and private rental are common pathways into homelessness and its retention assists with continuing the focus on improving performance measurement on this issue.

The Working Group considered the performance measure for this indicator should focus on sustainable housing outcomes. The revised measure is a long-term proxy measure of outcomes for people who access specialist homelessness services, as data on the housing outcomes for all social housing and private rental tenants who receive support through other programs to maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing are not available and are not expected to become available during the life of the NPAH.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 5 – *The proportion of people in social housing and private rental and accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing*

PB 5

No performance benchmark is proposed for this indicator, due to the uncertainties associated with the replacement of the SAAP National Data Collection by the SHS data collection in 2011-12. In lieu of a specific benchmark, the preferred direction of this indicator is for an increase.

5.2.6 Performance Indicator 6

PI 6 – *The proportion of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness*

*It is recommended that this indicator be **retained**.*

It was considered that this indicator demonstrates a clear connection the outcome 'Fewer people will become homeless more than once'.

While it is subject to data constraints, the Working Group considered that this outcome was too important to go unmeasured and that no better indicator was available. The Working Group also took account of improvements in data that are likely to result from the revised measure (see below) and the improvements resulting from the transition from the SAAP to the SHS data collection.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 6 – *The proportion of people accessing specialist homelessness services who experience repeat periods of homelessness*

PB 6

It is recommended that the existing performance benchmark be retained, noting that caveats may be applied to the data when it is reported, to assist with interpretation of the results - in particular the extent to which comparability issues between SAAP and SHS data may be influencing the results. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) proposes to produce two measures for 2011-12 to assist with transitioning to the new data source: one SAAP-like measure and one that uses the improvements offered by the SHS data.

5.2.7 Performance Indicator 7

PI 7 – *Number of young people (12 to 18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, school and work*

Recommendation 4 – It is recommended that PI 7 be **revised** as follows:

The proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, school or work.

The indicator was assessed as demonstrating weak connections with the outcome 'People at risk of experiencing homelessness will improve connections with their families and communities and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation', because it only covers young people, not the wider population. Furthermore, the indicator as currently worded construes success only when young people are engaged with family, school and work, which may not be appropriate or desirable for all young people, particularly 12-14 year olds.

There were also conceptual issues with this indicator, due to its use of number rather than proportion. As noted earlier, this makes it unclear whether an increase would represent an improvement or a decline in performance, as changes to the indicator would reflect factors such as population growth or decline.

The indicator focuses on young people because achieving employment, education and community connectedness is particularly important as a protective factor in reducing the likelihood of homelessness later in life. The Working Group considered that revising the indicator would address (at least in part) some of the conceptual issues. As outlined below, the revised indicator could improve the links to the outcomes by referencing a proportion and by developing a more effective measure (below) using the new data available under the SHS data collection that focuses on employment, education or training outcomes.

The revised measure is a long-term proxy measure of outcomes for people who access specialist homelessness services, as data are not available and are not expected to become available during the life of the agreement on outcomes for all homeless young people who re-engaged with family school or work. The measure focuses on employment, education or training because using connections to family/community as a measure of success is problematic, since such connection is not always appropriate (for example, where young people are escaping abusive family relationships). It is also problematic from a definitional perspective in reaching agreement on where the concept of family begins and ends.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 7 – Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) accessing specialist homelessness services who get support to access education, training or employment

PB 7

No performance benchmark is proposed for this indicator, due to the uncertainties associated with the replacement of the SAAP National Data Collection by the SHS collection in 2011-12. In lieu of a specific benchmark, the preferred direction of change in this indicator an increase.

5.2.8 Performance Indicator 8

PI 8 – Number of children (under 12 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are provided with additional support to maintain contact with their school

Recommendation 5 – It is recommended that PI 8 be **removed**.

No data source has been identified for this indicator and therefore further data development would be required which is not likely to yield results during the course of the NPAH. It is difficult to define what is meant by 'maintain contact with school' as this could cover occasional contact, enrolment but non attendance, through to daily attendance. There are similar issues with the concept of what is meant by 'additional support'.

Despite the removal of this indicator due to lack of appropriate data, the Working Group acknowledges the importance of measuring outcomes for homeless children. Information on numbers of homeless children will be available through disaggregations of relevant indicators by age (eg PI 1 and PI 3 for accompanying children). The Working Group also noted that the SHS data collection will treat accompanying children seeking services as clients in their own right, which will enable more information to be collected than was previously available under SAAP. While it is still not possible to measure PI 8 in its current form, information will be available on student status or access to education in the SHS collection.

5.2.9 Performance Indicator 9

PI 9 – Number of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive financial advice, counselling and/or case management

Recommendation 4 – It is recommended that PI 9 be **revised** as follows:

The proportion of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive case management.

This indicator is an output indicator and is only weakly connected with the relevant outcome, as it only measures how many families receive services, not the quality of these services or whether these services improve access to sustainable housing.

However, the Working Group recommends retaining this PI because it is the only indicator that contributes towards measuring the quality services component of the outcome 'People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'. References to financial advice and counselling have been removed because it was felt these services are captured in case management plans, where relevant.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

PM 9 – *The proportion of specialist homelessness services cased managed clients with goals achieved*

This long-term proxy measure has limitations because it only measures outcomes for people accessing the specialist homelessness services system. It is recognised that the measure of goals achieved is an imprecise one that will be influenced by the extent to which the goals set are realistic. However, the Working Group determined that the measure is valuable as it gives an indication of client outcomes and no better measure of quality could be identified.

PB 9

No performance benchmark is proposed for this indicator, due to the uncertainties associated with the replacement of the SAAP National Data Collection by the SHS data collection in 2011-12. In lieu of a specific benchmark, the preferred direction of change for this indicator is an increase.

5.2.10 Performance Indicator 10

PI 10 – Number of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who provided with legal services

Recommendation 5 – It is recommended that PI 10 be removed.

This indicator is an output indicator with only a weak and limited connection with the outcome 'People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'. The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) suggests output indicators should only be used where no appropriate outcome indicators are available and the indicator is the best available proxy measure of the outcome. There is no substantive evidence to show that provision of legal services per se will help achieve a change in a person's homelessness status by improving their access to sustainable housing, so it does not appear to be a useful proxy. Furthermore, access to legal services is only one element of service provision and does not demonstrate quality of service.

5.2.11 Performance Indicator 11

PI 11 – Number of staff of specialist homelessness services provided with formal training and development opportunities

Recommendation 5 – It is recommended that PI 11 be removed.

This PI is an input indicator with minimal connection with the outcome 'People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing'. Measuring the provision of formal training and

development for staff of services does not measure housing outcomes for clients. Additionally, data is not currently available to report against this indicator.

5.3 Recommendations for additions to the existing performance indicator (PI) framework

5.3.1 New performance indicator 2

Recommendation 6 – It is recommended that a new PI (PI 2 in proposed revised framework) be **added** to the Performance Reporting Framework as follows:

The proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless

This indicator, which is currently reported as a disaggregation of PI 1, is proposed by the Working Group as an indicator in its own right. Adding this this indicator will give more prominence to the Indigenous data and the benchmark from the existing performance framework, in accordance with COAG commitment to Closing the Gap, given that Indigenous people are overrepresented in the homeless population.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

New PM (PM 2 in proposed revised framework) – *Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless*

There is an existing benchmark relating to homelessness amongst Indigenous Australians, previously reported against using the disaggregated data from PI 1. It is recommended that the performance benchmark be retained as a benchmark for the new PI 2, with minor changes to the wording as follows:

New PB (PB 2 in proposed revised framework) – *33.3 per cent reduction in the number of Indigenous Australians who are homeless by 2013*

5.3.2 New performance indicator 4

Recommendation 6 – It is recommended that a new PI (PI 4 in proposed revised framework) be **added** to the Performance Reporting Framework as follows:

Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)

This indicator is proposed as an indicator in its own right rather than relying on the disaggregation of PI 2 – *Proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)* - to demonstrate outcomes for Indigenous homeless people, given the over-representation of Indigenous people in the rough sleeper population.

The performance measure recommended for this indicator is:

New PM (PM 4 in proposed revised framework) – *Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)*

PB

There is no existing benchmark for Indigenous rough sleepers. The Working Group determined that it was inappropriate to set a new benchmark at this stage in the agreement, when all initiatives have already been decided and jurisdictions had no opportunity to adjust deliverables to meet new expectations. Additionally, the relevant data would rely on census data. As there will be no Census conducted in the remaining life of the agreement it was considered that it was unlikely that agreeing the benchmark now could have any effect. The ABS review of the methodology for counting the homeless⁵⁰, which is now not due to report until May 2012, may also have unanticipated impacts on Indigenous rough sleeper numbers.

In lieu of a specific benchmark, the preferred direction of change for this indicator is a decrease.

5.4 Proposed revised performance indicator framework

Recommendation 7 – Based on the findings of this review, the Working Group has recommended a revised performance indicator framework, including supporting performance measures, data sources and benchmarks, which is set out in its entirety at Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Recommended revised performance reporting framework

Revised Number	Performance Indicator	Performance Measure	Baseline/ Data Source	Performance Benchmark
PI 1	Proportion of Australians who are homeless	Proportion of Australians who are homeless	2006 Census* (baseline) 2011 Census	7 per cent reduction in the number of homeless Australians by 2013
PI 2	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are homeless	2006 Census* (baseline) 2011 Census	33.3 per cent reduction in the number of Indigenous homeless Australians by 2013
PI 3	Proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)	Proportion of Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)	2006 Census* (baseline) 2011 Census	25 per cent reduction in the number of rough sleepers by 2013

⁵⁰ ABS, Discussion Paper: Methodological Review of Counting the Homeless, 2006 (cat. no. 2050.55.001).

PI 4	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)	Proportion of Indigenous Australians who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping)	2006 Census* (baseline) 2011 Census	Preferred direction: decrease
PI 5	Proportion of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence	Proportion of clients accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing following family violence	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS**	Preferred direction: increase
PI 6	Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing	Proportion of people exiting care and custodial settings accessing specialist homelessness services who secure sustainable housing	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS**	Preferred direction: increase
PI 7	Proportion of people in social housing and private rental who are supported to maintain or secure sustainable housing	Proportion of people in social housing and private rental and accessing specialist homelessness services who maintain or secure sustainable housing	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS**	Preferred direction: increase
PI 8	Proportion of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness	Proportion of people accessing specialist homelessness services who experience repeat periods of homelessness	2007-08 SAAP (baseline) 2008-09 to 2010-11 SAAP 2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS**	25 per cent reduction in the number of people experiencing three repeat periods of homelessness at an emergency service in 12 months by 2013
PI 9	Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, school or work	Proportion of young people (12 to 18 years) accessing specialist homelessness services who get support to access education, training or employment services	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS**	Preferred direction: increase
PI 10	Proportion of families who are homeless or	Proportion of specialist homelessness services	2011-12 to 2012-13 SHS**	Preferred direction:

	at risk of homelessness who receive case management	case managed clients with goals achieved		increase.
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*2006 Census data will be used for the baselines as data is not available for 2008. 2011 Census data will inform assessment of the 2013 benchmarks and may be supplemented by other available data. 2006 baselines subject to revision by the ABS.

**Data from the SHS (which replaced the SAAP National Data Collection on 1 July 2011) may not be fully comparable to data from the SAAP National Data Collection. The baseline and benchmark for PI8 was retained, noting that caveats may be applied to assist with interpretation when reporting. The remaining indicators with measures using SHS data did not have baselines or benchmarks previously and none have been specified due to the uncertainties of the change from the SAAP National Data Collection to SHS.

Indicators to be disaggregated by key population groups where appropriate. These may include: Indigenous, age, gender, geographic location, disability etc. Note that disability data have limitations.

Other data sources will be examined where appropriate to provide broader contextual information.

The indicators have been re-numbered to reflect the addition and removal of indicators as above. All of the indicators under the revised framework either provide a strong measure of the relevant outcome, or, where this was not possible, robust long-term proxy indicators providing information on for key policy directions. Acceptable data also exist that will allow all of these indicators to be reported against. The performance indicator framework currently contained in the NPAH is included for comparison at Appendix 2.

Benchmarks have not been proposed for a number of indicators due to the uncertainties associated with changing from the SAAP to the SHS data collection in 2011-12. The Working Group recommends against setting benchmarks for these indicators, even once data are available from the SHS data collection in October 2012, given the short time remaining between then and the end of the term of the NPAH.

5.5 Cost benefit analysis

The Working Group considered the relative costs and benefits of the proposed revisions to the performance reporting framework, as well as those of an alternative option of developing further data to fill existing data gaps and to better enable more timely and robust performance measurement and reporting.

The changes to the NPAH performance indicators and associated performance measures proposed in this report do not involve additional data development costs as they leverage off work that has already been funded, including in particular the development by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in conjunction with the State and Territory Governments and the Commonwealth, of the new SHS data collection to improve reporting on homeless clients.

The proposed approach has benefits in terms of improved information and accountability, including:

- Improved population-level indicators, which include increased emphasis on Indigenous homelessness in accordance with COAG commitment to Closing the Gap.
- Improved measurement of outcomes for key homelessness cohorts through service provision measures which will enable focus to be maintained on key policy issues.

The proposed changes to performance indicators will result in a better alignment with the outcomes of the NPAH, allowing for more meaningful reporting of performance. This will give all jurisdictions access to better information when addressing homelessness and potentially result in improved policy outcomes.

However, there remain limitations in reporting against those indicators that rely on measures drawn from the SHS collection because data are not available on the whole homeless population. The proposed performance measures based on SHS data are long-term proxy or partial measures which capture outcomes for people who access these specialist homelessness services. However, this data are at best a rough indicator of outcomes for the wider population.

Despite this, these indicators are included in the proposed revised framework because the clients captured in the SHS data have been identified as the main identifiable and reported group experiencing homelessness. By including indicators for this group, a better assessment of the performance of homelessness programs will be possible.

An alternate option involving undertaking significant further data development work to improve reporting of population level data was considered. However, obtaining accurate and timely population level data would require undertaking what would be, in effect, a more thorough and rigorous version of the national census collection but on a more frequent basis.

Such an exercise would result in better data on homelessness than the proposed approach and would have the advantage of providing an improved understanding and, potentially, enhanced policy outcomes. However, even if a significantly more reliable collection were possible, the Working Group considered that associated costs would be prohibitive, being several orders of magnitude higher than for the national census. Finally, given the lead in time for national censuses or surveys, it would not be possible to complete this further work during the life of the NPAH.

Thus, despite the benefits that would flow from the availability of comprehensive information on homelessness, the Working Group did not believe that taking on the cost was justified at this time.

The ABS is also investigating whether, and if so how, Centrelink data can help estimate homelessness between Censuses. The initial aim of the investigation is to ascertain the strength of correlation, for a range of personal characteristics, between Census area-

based estimates of homelessness, and estimates of Centrelink clients in the same area, at the same time, that were likely to be homeless.

5.6 Transitional issues

SHS data collection

The replacement of the SAAP National Data Collection by the SHS collection will result in data that are not fully compatible, as the two collections vary in both scope and the way information is collected about clients and children in particular. As the SHS collection has just commenced, the full extent of the data comparability issues is still being investigated by the AIHW. The AIHW proposes to produce two measures for 2011-12 to assist with transitioning to the new data source: one SAAP-like measure and one that uses the improvements offered by the SHS. SHS data for 2011-12 are expected to be available before the end of 2012.

SHS collection data will provide a more comprehensive picture of homelessness in Australia, including improved data on causes of homelessness, repeat homelessness, exits into housing, and children who are homeless. This will enable better assessment of the performance of homelessness programs.

ABS review of Counting the Homeless

It should also be noted that the homelessness population measures will be affected by the results of the ABS Review of the methodology for counting the homeless, which is currently expected to be released in May 2012. Revised estimates, which remove identified overestimation, would imply a possible downward revision of the 2006 numbers by around 40 per cent. However, ABS is working to establish whether new estimates for aspects of homelessness not attempted before – especially in regard to improved Indigenous homelessness estimates – can be derived using Census data, and whether a robust method can be developed for estimating aspects of ‘couch-surfing’⁵¹ which has been incorrectly reported in the Census. As that research has not been finalised at the time of this report, no analysis of the impacts of Census data on benchmarks has been included and baseline numbers are not currently able to be specified. The ABS will retrospectively adjust the population data for 2001 and 2006 to reflect the revised methodology and it is proposed that the Select Council on Homelessness review the baselines for Pls 1-4 once the ABS data become available.

Recommendation 8 – COAG to note the baselines for Pls 1-4 will change following the publication by the ABS of revised estimates of the 2006 homeless population.

⁵¹ Couch surfing refers to people who are living in temporary accommodation or temporarily staying with a friend or family member, typically sleeping on the couch or floor.

5.7 Response to the COAG Reform Council (CRC) recommendations on performance reporting in the NPAH

As part of this review of the NPAH, the Working Group was asked to address the following recommendations made to COAG by the CRC in its *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness: Early Assessment of Progress 2009-10* in July 2010.

CRC Recommendation 1:

The COAG Reform Council recommends COAG note the council's assessment that:

- the performance indicators as currently set out in the agreement—with the exception of the three population indicators that utilise census data—cannot be reported against
- the performance reporting framework is incomplete and, despite substantial data development efforts underway, it is likely to remain so for the life of the agreement
- continued efforts to develop and measure the problematic performance indicators and benchmarks in the agreement are unlikely to provide useful information during the life of the agreement and risk diverting governments' focus from the broader data development task to measure the outcomes of the agreement
- all governments have shown a strong commitment to the continued improvement of the performance framework. The data development work now being undertaken to improve the quality and scope of homelessness data may in time result in a substantially improved data system on homelessness in Australia.

CRC Recommendation 2:

The COAG Reform Council recommends that COAG request the Housing Ministers Conference to:

- review the performance reporting framework for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, reporting to COAG by December 2010
- use the review to develop and implement a simplified performance reporting framework focused on indicators of the homeless population and program-based performance measures, as proposed in this early assessment
- separately bring forward a plan, during 2011, for the broader development of data to support the reporting of outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The plan should take into account the cost, benefits and relative prioritisation of data development options and COAG's agreed outcomes and objectives.

The Working Group noted that at the time that the CRC report was written there were large gaps in homelessness data, which impacted adversely on governments' ability to report on performance under the NPAH.

This lack of data led to a range of data development projects being progressed over the last eighteen months. In particular, the SHS data collection has been developed and

implemented, enabling improved outcomes focused reporting which is more consistent with the IGA performance reporting framework than program and output measures. Several indicators proposed in this review utilise this new data.

With regard to the specific recommendations for actions to be taken to review the existing performance framework, develop and implement a revised framework and bring forward a plan for data development in 2011:

- FaHCSIA, with input from the AIHW and state and territory departments responsible for housing and homelessness, began a review of the performance reporting framework for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness in December 2010. This process was superseded by the COAG agreement at its meeting on 13 February 2011 to adopt the recommendations of the Heads of Treasuries review of National Agreements, National Partnerships and Implementation Plans, which included a review of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.
- COAG specifically required that the review of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness consider the performance framework. The Working Group has considered changes to improve the framework, including those recommended by the CRC as a result of its own assessment.
 - The framework proposed in this report retains the population measures drawn from the Census and includes performance measures that draw on Specialist Homelessness Services data to measure sustainable housing and social inclusion outcomes.
 - The performance reporting framework will be supported by more standardised annual reporting on the outputs of NPAH initiatives against jurisdictions' Implementation Plans, through a revised reporting template.
 - The new SHS collection will improve data collection and reporting on outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.